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Ch. Kemphill
LIONEL DEERHURST;

OR,

FASHIONABLE LIFE

UNDER THE REGENCY.

By Barbara Kemphill
EDITED

BY THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE DEERHURSTS.

CHAPTER I.

AN hour, in the state of my mind, appeared as an age. I was in a fever of excitement, that communicated itself to my whole frame. I walked up and down the Terrace like one distracted, gazed at my watch incessantly; then would not look at it till I thought the time expired, pulled it out again, and, seeing but half an hour had elapsed, dashed it furiously on the ground. To quench my burning thirst I drank a glass of wine—it was but a glass, but in my weakened state it affected me, increasing my fever—let me say delirium. From very fatigue I flung myself on the couch, and soon fell into an uneasy slumber, through which I preserved a consciousness of surrounding objects, for I felt the rich perfume of the flowers wafted over my throbbing temples by the night air, which rushed in through the open

casement, for a fresh breeze blew over the water. I heard a servant enter, draw the silken curtains, and remove the lamps, that their soft light should not fall on my eyelids. After that I sunk into a delicious repose, that an infant might have enjoyed. I started from it as the time-piece struck eleven; the tedious hour had fled at last. I was just going to rise and shake off my languor, when the door opened, and through my half-closed lids I saw Clara enter, and, after gently closing it, approach with noiseless steps to the couch on which I rested. I was aware she knelt on the cushion beside it, gazed intently on me, and then sighed deeply.

All this time I remained immovable, but the throbbing of my heart was so violent, I felt my chest heave as if convulsed. Several minutes passed in this way, my agitation every moment increasing. Then she bent over me, and said:—

“Freville, dear Freville, I fear I disturb your rest: but it is late, and I must speak a few words to you.”

I opened my eyes languidly on her, but did not speak.

“Do rise,” she exclaimed in a tone of impatience, “I have a request to make, and, indeed, you must grant it.”

I raised myself from my recumbent attitude,

but preserved silence, my emotions were too violent to admit of speech.

"You are sleeping yet," she said, turning her dove-like eyes on me; "but try to rouse yourself, and listen patiently."

"I am all attention," I replied, sighing deeply.

"Freville, I know you are proud, petulant, and easily offended, but surely you would not take offence from your cousin Clara, your first, dearest, and most sincere friend. You propose leaving here to-morrow, and all earthly enjoyments are so uncertain, it is hard to say when we may meet again ;—perhaps, never."

I could no longer command myself, I threw myself at her feet, and uttered cries of convulsive anguish.

"Oh ! in pity's sake rise," she exclaimed, "you will destroy your poor broken leg ; and besides, I do not like the attitude : rise, or you will oblige me to retire without uttering my request."

She spoke this with kindness, but in a tone of decision. She was calm—had all her senses about her ; but I was frantic. Yes ! I call all the hosts of heaven to witness, that on that night I was frantic.

"Lady Eastville, what do you require of a wretch like me?" I said, but my voice was deep and unnatural, it seemed to proceed from my heart, and that my parched lips had no power of utterance.

My emotion affected her, she was no longer calm, and she spoke rapidly, saying :

“Freville, ere I express it, say you will grant my request; be generous, and let no false scruples exist between us. Reflect on the lateness of the hour. There is an impropriety in my being here. You are too friendly—too honourable to detain me. Do you promise?”

I fell at her knees exclaiming :

“I call heaven to witness, though it were to stake my immortal soul to perdition, I will unhesitatingly grant your request.” She shuddered, then in a solemn, stern tone said :

“Freville, this really is awful. You are sinful beyond belief. How can you talk in this manner? Have you no fear of God before your eyes? However, time passes on. I came not here to reproach, but serve you. You have sworn to grant my request, and cannot go back; here then, accept of this sum of money from me: it is needless to add it is solely mine, being the price paid for the furniture of the Parsonage. It will prevent the necessity of you selling your commission, than which nothing could be more ruinous: your mind is too ardent, even if you possessed wealth, to be satisfied with a life of idleness. And, oh, Freville! with this gift let me hope that you will compose yourself and learn to subdue your temper; its indulgence must ultimately destroy both your health and respectability.”

As she uttered these last words she drew from her bosom a small embroidered purse, containing, as I afterwards learned, notes to the amount of £300. She was hastily retiring, but I grasped her arm, saying, I would thank her, and when she insisted upon going, I called out :

“At least you shall not move till I see your father’s picture.”

She looked steadily in my face: my flashing eyes and quivering lips terrified her; she thought me delirious, and made a spring to escape, but I thrust my hand into her bosom and snatched the picture from it—cast it aside; then falling before her, confessed my ardent, undying love, and in the excess of my guilty madness dared to ask a return.

For some moments she remained immovable, being perfectly horror-struck; recovering herself she cast on me a look of scorn and abhorrence, which wrought my soul to still greater frenzy, and not deigning to speak, hurried to the door; but I placed my back against it, and again insulted her with my declarations of love.

“Miserable, lost, abandoned man, how dare you to detain me, and oblige me to listen to your sinful, hateful, confessions! Shame on you, Freville, to requite Sir Egbert’s hospitality and offend my delicacy by such a disgraceful speech! How weak and vain you must be to suppose, even

admitting I was void of all dignity and principle, that I could transfer my affections from the exalted, the noble, Sir Egbert, to a wretch like you. From this hour I renounce your acquaintance—I deny our relationship; I leave you to your fate without compassion or interest. Away, vile seducer! To-morrow, quit my house. Contaminated by your presence,—to think that you, whom I loved and confided in as a brother, you who ever found a home in my father's house should requite all his goodness by thus insulting me! I pray to heaven that we may never again meet. Dare to prevent my retreat, and I will alarm the whole family."

She darted towards the bell; but my passion by this time had risen to such a height, I became as one possessed. I made a sudden spring after her, savagely entwined my arm round her waist, and seeing a fruit knife glitter on the table, snatched it up, and pointing it to her breast exclaimed, "Cruel, barbarous woman, mine you will not be, but never again shall my hated rival, Sir Egbert, possess you."

Almost convulsed with terror, in low plaintive accents she said: "Oh, Freville! surely you would not kill Clara Arnheim, the friend and companion of your childhood?"

I groaned aloud, dashed the offensive instrument from my hand, and staggered. With ex-

traordinary presence of mind she gave me a sudden jerk, and I fell prostrate on the ground. Disengaged from my hold, she rushed from the apartment, locking the door after her. For some time I remained unable to move; such was the state to which I was reduced, that in my raving I called frantically on her to return, till exhausted I sank into insensibility. Passion had reduced me to a woman's weakness.

My first sensation was acute pain in my leg, which had been hurt by the fall, and a belief that my head had turned into a ball of fire. By great difficulty I rose, and with a confused consciousness attempted to reach the casement for air, when a kind of jibbering laugh, and a "ha, ha! Mr. Deerhurst," broke on my ears. Looking towards the place from where the sound proceeded, I saw the hideous face of Nelly Dudgeon, as she stood at the casement with her hands a-kimbo, and her purpled visage expressive of fiend-like triumph. In the weakened state of my nerves, it is impossible to express the fearful impression she made on my mind.

In after years the memory of deeper, of sadder scenes have faded away before the influence of time; but the countenance of that fury has never been forgotten. Often has it haunted my pillow till I was obliged to quit my rest and seek for relief in society—nay, even dissipation.

The first glance I cast at Nelly Dudgeon restored my reason, and all the injury I had done the amiable, the gentle Clara, in exposing her to the observations of such a wretch, rose before me. For a moment I hesitated how to act; then concluding it better to bully in a commanding voice, called out: "What brings you here? What business have you with me at this hour?"

"You are not my master," she answered insolently, "though Lady Eastville is your mistress; but when my noble master returns to-morrow, great a gentleman as you are, Mr. Deerhurst, and ready as you were to complain of poor servants, I take my oath you shall tramp off, even before myself."

I perfectly trembled before her, and quickly resolved to bribe her to silence; but closing the window, she fled before I could arrange my plans. I spent the night in a state of unspeakable misery, indeed my grief amounted to despair.

All hopes of Clara were for ever lost. My own conduct had placed an impassable gulf between us, and most probably I should never again see her, who to me was as the light of heaven. Then these selfish regrets yielded to apprehensions lest Nelly, by her reports, might expose her to mortification or suspicion, or perhaps the jealousy of Sir Egbert, and then I would exclaim, unhappy Clara, what brought her to my room? Why, in the

silence of the night, amidst its dubious light, did she steal on my rest, and, like a spirit of darkness, assuming an angel's form, work up my soul to madness!—To rest was impossible. I attempted to lie on the couch, but the attitude increased my oppression, so in spite of the pain of my leg, which was greatly inflamed since my fall, I paced up and down the Terrace walk, gazed into the hall and on the wide staircase, with the terrible conviction that only a few steps separated me from Clara, and still that I was doomed never again to see her. Towards morning, from the excess of exhaustion, I threw myself on the couch, and fell into a feverish slumber.

I was roused by a servant entering with my breakfast. "It is very strange, Mr. Deerhurst," he said; "but some person locked your door outside."

This awakened me to a full consciousness of all that had happened on the preceding night. I made no observation, and the attendant retired. Again I began to revolve the results likely to arise from my frenzy. I hoped Nelly had witnessed the whole scene, then she must acquit Lady Eastville. If so, I cared not how much I was criminated. Of course if Sir Egbert's pride or jealousy were roused, he would challenge me; in that case I would send for Mellish as my second, heroically stand his fire, and fire my own pistols off in the

air. I do solemnly declare that, amidst all my suppositions and plans, one thought of an offended God never occurred, one prayer for his forgiveness or support never was uttered, and I solely leant on the broken reed of my own contrivances to rescue me out of the danger in which I had involved myself.

I rung the bell, and sent to say I wished to speak to Nelly Dudgeon. The footman sneered palpably; but I was void of all discretion. Perfectly bewildered from the excess of grief and remorse, while impatiently waiting for her, I heard a carriage drive up to the door; and then the bustle attending Sir Egbert's arrival, and the sweet voice of Clara reached me as she welcomed him back.

I attempted to rise and go out on the Terrace walk, but I shrank back on my seat like a thief afraid of detection. Soon after Doctor Jerold entered my apartment. He was addressing me in his usual cheerful manner, when, fixing his eyes on my wild and haggard visage, he exclaimed: "My dear Sir, how is this? You appear extremely ill, why it is but five days since I last saw you, and though Lady Eastville said she was apprehensive for your health, I had no reason to be alarmed. What can have caused this sudden change?"

He sat beside me, and taking my wrist between

his fingers, shook his head, exclaiming: "Why, Mr. Deerhurst, you are trembling like a man in an ague; and worse again, your leg, which should be now quite well, is frightfully swollen. Pray explain how all this has happened."

Trying to force a smile, I replied: "For some days I have been feverish; and last night, being consumed with thirst, I drank some wine, which, in my weakened state, affected me, for I have never ranked a love of drink among my sins. In short, Doctor, I lost my balance and fell, and have spent a night of intense suffering."

"I can well believe it," he said, kindly; "come, raise your leg while I examine it."

As I was in the act of doing so the door opened, and Sir Egbert, with Herbert in his arms, and holding by the hand a fair, very delicate little girl, entered. How proud, how happy, how like a perfect gentleman he appeared! What an abject wretch I felt, as I shrank before my noble, generous host!

"This, Mr. Deerhurst," he said, "is our little girl, the Doctor's patient; look, is she not very like Lady Eastville?"

The child pressed forward, putting up her little mouth to kiss me.

"There, there!" exclaimed Jerold; "now go away, good girl. Sir Egbert, Mr. Deerhurst has received a fresh hurt on his leg, and I am really in very bad temper about it."

Sir Egbert expressed his regret, saying: "Now that I recognize in Mr. Deerhurst a relative of Lady Eastville, I must be doubly solicitous about him."

As he spoke these words, he fixed his eyes on me, with a look which seemed to penetrate my inmost thoughts. I felt confused, and essayed to say something in return for his politeness, when Nelly Dudgeon marched from my sleeping-room, saying: "Do you want me, Mr. Deerhurst?"

Cursing her in my soul, I hastily answered: "Not just now, Doctor Jerold will see to my leg."

"No wonder it should be painful," said she, addressing Dr. Jerold, while she cast upon me a look of diabolical triumph, "for Mr. Deerhurst did not sleep in his own bed last night."

"Is it possible, Mr. Deerhurst," exclaimed Sir Egbert, in a tone of unaffected surprise, "that you were unable to reach your room?"

"For heaven's sake," inquired Jerold, in a petulant voice, "why did you not ring for assistance? It was next to madness to remain up in your state of health—I have no patience with you."

Now, though a weak and certainly a very guilty man, nature never formed me for a hardened villain. Unequal to assume any self-command, I remained silent.

"Why do you loiter here?" said Sir Egbert, angrily, to Nelly, "and you, my love," he con-

tinued, patting Herbert's head, who was standing between my knees, "go to mamma."

They were scarcely gone, when the little girl who was playing about the room called out: "Look, papa, here is grandpapa's picture;" and she held up Mr. Arnheim's miniature, which I had wrenched from Clara's bosom.

Sir Egbert started—turned deadly pale, and, without saying a word, stepped out by the window. I felt some relief in seeing that he turned towards the path that led to the stables. In a minute or two he returned. He looked excited; but his voice was calm, as taking his little daughter by the hand he said: "Come now, and I will show you Lady Cora. By-the-bye, Mr. Deerhurst," turning to me, "have you seen her?"

I replied in the affirmative, and we then spoke for a few moments on the subject. He was scarcely gone, when Mrs. Waller came, and in hurried accents told Doctor Jerold that Lady Eastville requested to see him. He immediately obeyed her summons. Nearly an hour and a half elapsed before he returned, and he then appeared much agitated, and his generally cheerful, candid countenance was gloomy and stern. Closing the door carefully, in abrupt accents he said: "Mr. Deerhurst, Lady Eastville has confided to me the insult you offered her last night, and which you must be aware no excuse can palliate; though

she says you positively suffered under either the influence of wine or delirium ; and I believe her, for surely the most hardened libertine could not, if in the possession of his reason, dare to insult a lady so perfectly modest and retiring, moreover the wife of Sir Egbert Eastville."

I looked abashed, but made no reply.

After a time he said, with less sternness—"However, even were it my office to reproach you, I would not do so, for whatever infatuation seized you, your appearance, Mr. Deerhurst, sufficiently proves your regret ; let me then offer you my advice. Lady Eastville has resolved never again willingly to enter the company of a man who, under any circumstances, could presume to insult her, or so mistake her character as to impute illicit love to the friendship and confidence of early companionship. Although her nature is so gentle and yielding in trifles, when once she considers any act a religious duty, no earthly power can influence her, for, to confess a truth, being apprehensive that your quitting the Terrace in your present state may increase your fever, or worse again, awaken any suspicion in Sir Egbert, who constantly alludes to the strangeness of Lady Eastville never having spoken to him of you, her nearest relative, I pressed the necessity of your continuing a few days longer ; but she disdainfully silenced my importunities ; so, Mr. Deerhurst,

you have no alternative but to prepare to depart with me. I shall now see Sir Egbert, and plead your excuse by saying that your inflamed limb requires daily attendance, and that under the press of business I could not possibly spare it to you, except in my own house."

A groan of anguish burst from me.

"Nay, pluck up courage, young man," he said in friendly accents; "bid adieu to your hospitable host as cheerfully as you can. For worlds I would not that one suspicion crossed his breast. He is a man of the most acute sensibility; and to the coldest; jealousy is a fearful passion."

I then explained how Nelly Dudgeon certainly watched us. He expressed his regret, but said: "We can easily silence her with gin; however, you did right to acquaint me, for to-morrow I shall ride over and elicit all she knows and thinks on the subject."

A servant soon entered to pack up my things and place them in Doctor Jerold's chariot. All the preparations that were to separate me for ever from Clara were rapidly concluded, and I viewed them with an agony which I think must have again disturbed my reason, otherwise I could not have acted so indiscreetly—indeed some fatality seemed to drive me on. I had entered the hall, and having rung for the footman, sent by him some gratuity to the servants, with thanks for

the attention they had paid me. At the instant Herbert came bounding down the stairs, and springing to my arms, began to caress me, and with childish eagerness to press my stay.

It occurred to me that I should warn Clara of Nelly Dudgeon's knowledge of our interviews. I tore a leaf from my tablet, and first apologizing for my mad conduct in exposing her to danger, entreated she would guard against Nelly, and as soon as possible part with her. Just as it was concluded, I heard steps approaching; thrusting it into Herbert's bosom, I pinned it, and told him to take it to mamma, and to let no one else see it. Sir Egbert and Jerold now entered; the former with studied politeness regretted that illness should have hastened my departure, adding, that if I continued in the neighbourhood he should hope for my company when the hunting commenced.

Nelly bustled into the room; I thrust some money into her hand; she appeared grateful. Jerold looked angrily at me, and hurried forward.

"Will you not wait a moment to see Lady Eastville?" said Sir Egbert, addressing me, "I cannot imagine what detains her, for I have twice sent to acquaint her you were setting off. Why, Doctor!" he exclaimed, "I never saw you so impatient before," as Jerold actually dragged me forward.

“I am impatient for a patient,” said the Doctor, forcing a laugh.

“Jerold, if you mean this for a pun I cannot compliment your wit,” said Sir Egbert, laughing.

By this time I was placed in the carriage; Jerold jumped in after me; Sir Egbert mounted Lady Cora to see us part of the way, and soon, very soon I was hurried from the Terrace and its beloved mistress. When we reached the gate, Sir Egbert bade us adieu.

During the remainder of our drive, Jerold spoke seriously on my madness in having insulted Lady Eastville. However, he in some degree composed me by the assurance that he dreaded no further vexation from it. It was impossible, he thought that any thing such a wretch as Nelly said, could influence Sir Egbert, or affect his lady’s character. Alas! with all his knowledge of human nature, how little he anticipated the excess of misery which that vile, vindictive woman brought on her pure, high-minded mistress.

On reaching the small town of F—, Jerold courteously welcomed me to his home, then ushering me into what he termed his state apartment, he bade me good morning, observing that he should be professionally engaged until the dinner hour.

CHAPTER II.

DOCTOR JERROLD's house was plain ; it contained every thing necessary to the actual comforts of life ; but there were none of those elegant trifles which may be termed feminine, and that shed such a nameless charm around one's home.

My restlessness was so great that not even the torture inflicted upon my leg by exercise, could influence me to remain quiet. I paced up and down the apartment, then I made my way to the small garden, for I would not venture into the streets, I had such a horror of seeing any person. In this manner passed that memorable day ; about six in the afternoon the Doctor returned to eat a hasty dinner, he was much hurried with business ; my self-love was offended at his manner. He shook hands, indeed politely, with me, and ordered up a bottle of his best claret, which he seemed to enjoy, as he smacked his lips and praised its flavour. He ate his dinner with a keen appetite, and began to discourse upon some extraordinary case of nerves that had just come under his care. He was fond of his profession, and at the moment

all his faculties were engrossed by the probable success of an operation on this nervous patient. At length, noticing my abstraction, he good-humouredly said :

“ Here have I been indulging in what Lady Eastville terms mannerism ; however, Mr. Deerhurst, no hurry of business shall prevent my going to the Terrace in the morning, and prevent Nelly doing any further mischief.”

I thanked him, but I believe coolly, for I was of such an unreasonable temper, while I felt no concern for anything that was not immediately connected with my own happiness, I expected every person to be interested for me. Either not noticing, or what is just as probable, not caring about my ill-temper, Jerold handed me the key of his book-case, advised me to go to bed early, and prepared an anodyne for me to take at nine ; he then departed, saying his return was uncertain.

Oh ! how cold, how lifeless, how commonplace, all this appeared after the delicious evenings at the Terrace !

For the next three days I did not see Doctor Jerold. His establishment consisted of three or four servants, who proceeded in their business with the regularity of clock-work. My impatience under this dull, and monotonous existence was such that I thought even the excitement of grief would have been preferable.

On the fourth day I heard of his return with a joy that was damped the moment I saw him, for his usual placid countenance was full of sadness.

“ You have been at the Terrace,” I exclaimed, “ and matters there are not as well as you expected ; but, in pity’s sake do not deceive me, I am prepared for the worst.”

“ You have, young man, indeed, acted most foolishly, nay madly. But reproaches are useless, so sit down till I explain the result of your levity. It seems that in whatever struggle took place between you and Lady Eastville, your watch must have been broken, for we were not gone an hour when Sir Egbert saw it lying near the window ; this, with the miniature being found in your apartment, appeared strange. Though in general so haughty to his servants, he inquired of the butler, ‘ Had you drunk more wine than usual ? ’ Without wishing to criminate you, the man answered : ‘ That her Ladyship had ordered supper in your apartment—that no person was in attendance ; but it was probable you were ill, as Lady Eastville, against her usual custom, after seeing Master Herbert to bed, had returned to you.’ ‘ And the hour,’ said Sir Egbert, ‘ After eleven, I should think, my Lord,’ was the answer.

“ Now, Mr. Deerhurst, as you may suppose,

all this at least appeared strange to Sir Egbert, and made him feel uncomfortable; but it did not amount to absolute jealousy. At dinner he appeared as usual; when the dessert and the children came in, Herbert sprang into his arms; in playing with him he found your note in his dress. Even that might have passed unnoticed, but the child insisted that you gave it to him for mamma, and that no other person was to see it. Terrified and miserable from the hour you had insulted her, this last proof of your temerity overpowered Lady Eastville; clasping her hands she sank back upon her chair, without power to explain the truth or defend herself. Trembling from the excess of his fury, Sir Egbert read the ill-fated scroll: and then stamping with rage, summoned Nelly Dudgeon, and in the presence of his household and children, commanded her to tell all she knew of Lady Eastville and Mr. Deerhurst. Oh! think to what a frightful pitch his passion must have been wrought, to offer such an insult to his noble-minded lady, as to ask such an abandoned wretch to bear witness against her. This was Nelly's hour of triumph and revenge. But an hour before Waller, by her lady's command, had dismissed her, refusing to give her a character, and now from the virago burst forth all the vituperation of low-bred vulgarity; and she described Lady Eastville

as having devoted her whole time to you at the Terrace, to the exclusion of every other person, she said. She was also sure you were no relative at all, but that the story was invented to give colour to your intimacy. This coarse falsehood should have proved her infamy to Sir Egbert—but when did passion pause to reflect? Amidst her other bold assertions she said she had learned from your servant, Llewellyn, who it seems had come twice a week for your orders, and with messages from your corps, that you had been quartered three years before at Chatham; and Nelly then, with the most unblushing effrontery said, it was easy to account for Master Herbert's extreme likeness to you, as she knew her Lady spent all her evenings with Mrs. Janet Onslow; and that, as you were all Welsh people, no doubt you were always together, and that her old mistress, Lady Aylsbury, often said: "Nelly, I wonder how Lady Eastville can devote so much of her time to these mercantile people? Mark me, Egbert will be much displeased when he hears of it."

I interrupted Jerold to declare I had not only never seen Lady Eastville in Chatham, but at the period was ignorant of her being in its neighbourhood, and that my Colonel knew I had been on leave of absence most of the time that the regiment was quartered there.

"Any defence of Lady Eastville's character to me is quite superfluous," answered the Doctor

petulantly. "The unfortunate lady is incapable of error ; her sufferings proceed from the sins of others," he turned indignantly from me.

"Let me, in mercy, entreat of you to proceed," I cried.

"Then do not interrupt me, Mr. Deerhurst. I am much pressed for time, and this business at the Terrace afflicts me more than you can imagine. But to return to Lady Eastville, the gross insinuations of Nelly, and her bold assertions which she knew to be false, that Lady Aylsbury had disapproved of her intimacy with Mrs. Onslow, roused her from her depression, occasioned by a consciousness of having, however innocently, admitted of too great an intimacy with you. Turning to Sir Egbert, with the calm dignity natural to her, and a degree of spirit she seldom practised she said :

" ' Sir Egbert ; it grieves and surprises me that, under any circumstances, you can so far descend from your high position and general integrity as to listen to the coarse suggestions of that vile woman, instigated from low revenge at knowing her own character cannot bear investigation. Let me then entreat of you to resume your place as head of your household ; dismiss these people, who will recollect what has now occurred is but the result of mistaken passion. And bear in mind, said she turning to her domestics, that whoever alludes to this subject quits my service.' "

“As she spoke she waved her hand, and they all hastily retired from the apartment, Nelly calling out, ‘Sir Egbert, don’t let her deceive you, I can prove all I have said.’ Wrought up to a degree of anger, she had never before experienced, Lady Eastville pushed the door against her, then turning to Sir Egbert, she clasped her hands, and exclaimed :

“‘Egbert, much as you have insulted me, and that too in the presence of a set of low menials, still being aware that in some degree appearances are against me, I shall waive all sense of mortification, and fully explain the events which have led to this disgraceful scene. Alas ! that I should ever feel it necessary to defend my conduct to you, who, until this hour, I thought so highly esteemed me.’ She laid her hand gently on his arm, but he spurned her, exclaiming in a stifled voice :

“‘Wretched, abandoned woman ! more depraved more hateful, for your seeming virtues ! Dare not to approach me, hope not to again deceive me ; from this hour I renounce you. The whole scheme of your long practised deceptions now rise in terrible array before me ; blighting and destroying my every hope of happiness ; disgracing me and my children. My children !’ he exclaimed, groaning aloud. ‘Away, away,’ he cried, as Herbert, supposing he called, bounded towards him, and he dashed off the child with unmanly violence.

“ ‘ Good heaven !’ exclaimed Lady Eastville, while her every nerve quivered with agony, ‘ have mercy on us ! Oh ! Egbert,’ and she knelt at his feet, ‘ conquer this terrible passion. Listen, oh ! listen to my explanation, my noble-minded husband, my best, my only love. It is Clara kneels, if she has offended, to entreat your pardon ; but in mercy to yourself, to us all, calm this fearful passion.’ ”

“ ‘ No, no, no !’ he answered, as he stamped in his fury, ‘ from the beginning you loved this man, this Deerhurst. His very name was suppressed. He, the companion of your childhood, your only acknowledged relative, was never mentioned before me, for the least clue had served to betray your secret love. That clue is now found, and the whole light bursts on my astonished soul. Well might he give way to his feelings when Herbert first appeared before him. Even then the likeness struck me. Away, thou offspring of guilt !’ he exclaimed to the terrified child who stood before him ; ‘ your very sight blasts me. Ha, still here !’ and he raised his arm to strike him, under a state of terror to which no language can do justice.

Lady Eastville caught Herbert in her arms ; as she hurried with him from the apartment she heard Sir Egbert call out : ‘ And your evening banquet and nocturnal visits ! can these too be explained ? Hypocritical, abandoned woman !

the curse you have brought on me shall fall back tenfold into your own bosom.'

Having consigned Herbert to the care of Waller, she returned towards the dining-room, still hoping to appease Sir Egbert; but just as she reached the hall she saw him gallop off. This nearly deprived her of all hope; she sunk back in a fainting fit; the servants who, much terrified at the scene, had been watching their master, collected round her. Mrs. Waller immediately sent off an express for me, which I fortunately met on the way. Nelly, whose grosser nature could never comprehend the excess of misery which she had created, was forcibly turned out of the house by the other domestics. In short, on my arrival, the Terrace, so lately a scene of love and harmony, was in a tumult, all the servants were quarrelling among themselves, while their high-minded mistress, deserted and degraded, lay on the bed of sickness.

"Merciful heaven!" I exclaimed, "it cannot be that her precious life is in danger."

"God forbid," answered Jerold, with vivacity; "yet it seems to me now that her happiness is destroyed. Her pure spirit cannot long linger upon earth." I groaned aloud, and he continued, "To judge of her Christian meekness, you should see her, now that you have hurled her from her high state. 'Dear doctor,' said she to me, as I

handed her some restoratives, 'I will take whatever you order, but it is as a friend I at present require you. You must exert your skill to bring about a reconciliation, and I trust that in a few days, when Sir Egbert is calm enough to reflect and listen to reason, that the misery which overwhelms us will in some degree pass away; but I cannot deceive myself so far as to expect that the paradise of my home will ever return. No, the serpent has left his sting, and the very recollection of his own ungenerous doubts of my honour, and his unmanly violence, will press on the proud, sensitive heart of Sir Egbert to shadow the future. But even in this I see the goodness of my Creator, who chasteneth those whom he loveth. I was too happy, blessed beyond humanity, possessed of all most desirable; my every wish anticipated or obeyed by my adored husband. Might not such prosperity have hardened my heart, and gradually taught me to forget my dependence, my gratitude to the Dispenser of all? Let me not then dare to murmur at his will, and you, my venerable father,' she exclaimed, falling on her knees, 'blessed, thrice blessed be your memory, who early strove to impress on my mind the evanescence of all earthly treasures. The whole world may condemn me, nay, cry shame upon me, but they cannot lessen my virtue, while my hope rests with my God.' I entreated of her to rise.

and not thus agitate herself, but to sit down and arrange what was best to be done to recal Sir Egbert. She then told me that her greatest uneasiness proceeded from an apprehension that you and Sir Egbert would fight a duel, and that no reasoning could ever reconcile her to such an act; and she desired me to see you, and bear her assurance of forgiveness for the misery you had wrought, if you promised to decline Sir Egbert's challenge."

I was going to speak, but he interrupted me abruptly, saying,

"Patience, Mr. Deerhurst, till you hear our plans. Your honour, or rather the prejudices of society, I know, must be respected. In the first instance, learn that, by my advice, Lady Eastville has written a letter fully explanatory of all that has occurred on the Terrace relative to your insulting her, and in which I insisted that no consideration for you, who are in truth the aggressor, should tempt her to soften down your guilt."

I looked haughtily at him. He laid his hand on my arm, and said sternly,

"Nay, Mr. Deerhurst, I offer no apology for what I say,—mine is the language of truth. Why should I wish to see the innocent suffer for the guilty? And at present it is Sir Egbert's intention to separate for ever from his lady."

“Father of heaven !” I exclaimed, as I started up, while drops of agony rolled down my face, “it is not possible he could desert Clara. I am ready to make a full acknowledgment, to pronounce myself a villain, to submit to any mortification, to any punishment, so she escapes from ill.”

“Sit down, or you will destroy your unfortunate leg,” said Jerold, in kinder accents ; “besides, it is necessary for you to know the plan we have decided upon. Lady Eastville’s letter will be presented to Sir Egbert by the Rev. Mr. Coaltsley ; he is Rector of Saint Mary’s, and an old and sincere friend of Sir Egbert’s. He highly esteems Lady Eastville, and contemns the very idea of her being guilty ; for, to the disgrace of this neighbourhood, be it known that when Nelly Dudgeon bruited about the quarrel, her respectable authority was credited, and Lady Eastville, in spite of her religion and virtue, pronounced guilty. Positively the scandal of these people will make a misanthrope of me. Mr. Coaltsley will support the letter with his advice and firm belief in Lady Eastville’s innocence. Of course, Sir Egbert satisfied on that head, will seek to punish you for daring to insult him.”

“Of course, of course,” I uttered impatiently.

“I do not think so ill of you,” said the Doctor gravely, “as to suppose, even if you had the

power, that you would increase the misery you have wrought. But the fact is, your leg, which a few days hence promised to be a fellow for the other, is swollen to a degree, and shows symptoms of a very alarming nature."

"Good heaven!" I exclaimed, starting up in terror, "you cannot imagine there is any fear of my losing it."

"There is, if you jump up every moment you are excited. Independent of a professional feeling, which naturally makes me wish my patients to recover, I am sorry for you, as I impute the act of which you have been guilty to the uncurbed passion of youth, influenced by wine and fever. In cold blood, I am certain you could not act the villain."

Now in thus exposing my most secret thoughts, I must acknowledge that, from the time Jerold insinuated the possibility of my losing my leg, it in a great degree sobered and absorbed all my feelings; so I listened patiently while he proceeded to say,

"Mr. Deerhurst, though it is not hospitable to turn you out, I have presumed so far as to have engaged a place for you to-morrow in the coach which passes from York through the small hamlet of Eastville on its way to London. The moment you arrive there, send this letter," handing me one, "to Abernethy; he is my most intimate

friend, and will on that account pay you every attention. And you must be solely guided by his advice; for though I would not willingly afflict you, I feel it my duty to say, a few more days of such feverish excitement and stamping about, would most likely terminate in gangrene, leaving you no chance but death or the loss of your limb."

Shuddering, I expressed my horror.

"Are we not strange, inconsistent beings?" he said. "But a few moments ago, and you looked daggers at me because I did not wish you to meet Sir Egbert and stand his fire, when most probably another limb would be mutilated. Now it is to prevent this challenge I send you off. Abernethy will enclose me a certificate to prove your illness. This is intended for your Colonel. Mr. Coaltsley will show it to Sir Egbert, who for the time must postpone his revenge; and I expect that ere you are well enough to accept of his challenge, he will be convinced of his lady's innocence, be again restored to the ties of domestic love, and have too much good sense to risk his life, or disturb his family for the sake of punishing one whom he views as a reckless libertine. When not under the influence of passion, Sir Egbert is a man of an exalted and philosophic mind, and will not act against his judgment to please the multitude. I should suppose that the Eastvilles will remove from this

neighbourhood to the continent until the memory of this adventure passes away ; and in despite of Lady Eastville's sad presentiment, I hope she may enjoy many years of happiness. Now, Mr. Deerhurst, I will leave you. Retire soon to your rest, for you must be at the hamlet early, as the York mail only stops there to change horses. You will of course breakfast here, as the seldomer you move from the coach, the better." With these words he bade me good night, and retired.

Earlier on the following morning than was necessary, I was awakened by his entering my apartment. He kindly attended to my leg, but I felt mortified at his anxiety to get me out of his house. Though in general so calm in his temper, and regular in his habits, he threw his whole household into a fuss to hurry the breakfast ; and ere I could swallow a cup of coffee, his chariot, which was to convey me to the hamlet, was announced. He immediately assisted me into it, filled the pockets with interesting volumes, which he requested I would take on to London, hoping they might amuse me ; then, pitying my extreme dejection, in friendly accents he desired me to cheer up, as he expected ere many days to have it in his power to acquaint me that harmony was restored at the Terrace.

CHAPTER III.

IT wanted some minutes of ten when I drove from Doctor Jerold's. He accompanied me on horseback for about a quarter of a league, and then bade me adieu, being obliged to visit some patients in a different direction. Much exhausted, I leant back, and fell into an uneasy slumber, from which I was roused by the carriage stopping. The footman opened the door, helped me to descend, and pointing to a narrow pathway, said it led to a seat, within a few yards of which the coach must stop, and that a horn was always blown to acquaint the Eastvilles, lest any person from the Terrace might wish to go. He offered his attendance to show me the way, but I declined, and he drove off.

I was then within the precincts of Sir Egbert's demesne—within a few paces of the house which contained Clara, my worshipped Clara! Those only who have loved as I did can imagine the wild throbbing of my bosom. At the thought

I drew forth a watch Jerold had lent me ; it was not yet eleven, and the coach would not reach the hamlet for half an hour. An ardent wish once more to see the Terrace, that hallowed scene of my exquisite happiness and mad folly, seized me. I passed rapidly through a turn-gate, leading to a walk which ran along the top of an old ditch, on either side of which were hedges of evergreens, intermixed with wild briars and roses. This avenue led to a pleasure ground, which divided it from the lawn, and was protected from the cattle by a sunk fence. Though quite lame, and suffering much pain, I actually ran on to get a view of the house, to obtain which I had to enter on another path, and which was terminated by a rustic bridge thrown over a trout stream. Crossing it, I found myself on a wide avenue, which branched off in two directions ; the one to the right led to the house, the other to the kitchen garden, behind which was the village, and a stile was placed for the workmen to pass from it into the grounds. So my wanderings had led me still nearer to the spot where the coach stopped, and this was fortunate, for I felt ill and fatigued ; however, I moved down, though slowly, to gaze on the house. Having cast on it what I imagined would be a last look, I turned back, and seeing the ruins of an old pavilion, which lay near the garden wall, I resolved to enter, and remain there till I heard the

coach. This ruin had been converted into a garden-house, and was crowded with implements for gardening, seeds, and some rustic benches ; on one of these I threw myself, and again I looked at my watch, for I felt impatient to be gone, but it still wanted a quarter of an hour of the time. I sprang up, for I heard the barking of dogs ; an Italian greyhound and a little terrier rushed in, and were soon followed by Herbert, his tiny voice calling out their names. In a transport I caught the bright child in my arms ; he returned my caress, but seeing the dogs run out, impatiently called to follow them. As I laid him down, Lady Eastville entered. On seeing me, she started, uttered a scream, and overcome by terror at my sudden appearance, grasped at the door for support.

As to me, this unexpected, un hoped-for meeting, threw me into a state of the wildest confusion, depriving me of all reflection. Blessing the chance which afforded me an opportunity of apologizing for the injury I had wrought, I darted forward, and dashing myself at her feet, grasped her hands, alternately pressing them to my throbbing heart and temples. Astonished at my presumption, my temerity, some time elapsed ere her trembling tongue could find utterance. Then, dashing me from her, she exclaimed, while her whole frame glowed with indignation :

“ Miserable, lost man ! how dare you, in the

very excess of your wickedness, thus a second time presume to insult me by your hateful professions? How dare you lurk about here like a fiend of darkness, watching for its prey to drag it on to destruction? A demon might be satisfied with the misery you have already wrought. Oh, Almighty God! why allow the wicked thus to triumph?"

I was really shocked and grieved. Was I awake, or did my reason wander? Could it indeed be the gentle, the religious Clara Arnheim who stood before me, flushed with anger? A moment, and other thoughts arose, and I gloried in thinking that her passions could be so roused. Anger was sin, and sin brought her nearer to me. Hitherto she had always appeared so calm, so pure, so pious, it seemed a perfect sacrilege to attempt her seduction. I attempted to soothe her with words of tenderness; she rushed from the ruin. I darted after her, calling out:—

"Clara, I only crave forgiveness for the past; grant it, and I will swear never again to intrude myself into your presence."

She would have fled from my importunities, but faint and staggering, she leant against the garden wall, without power to move, but waving her hand to me to leave her. Far from obeying, I entreated her compassion, exclaiming:

"Clara, probably we shall never again meet on

earth ; send me not away, then, with the increased sorrow of your displeasure. Alas ! it needeth not, for my uncontrollable love for you drives me almost to the verge of madness ; in pity, then, pronounce my pardon for a crime originating in yourself."

Turning on me a look of withering scorn, she repeated :

" Uncontrollable love !" adding, " Freville, hope not to excuse yourself to me by such weak apologies, thus making a mockery of my reason. Think you passion is an excuse for insult ; degrading indeed must be its influence when it led you to trample on all the laws of hospitality, when it led you to return Sir Egbert's generous kindness in risking his life to save yours, by attempting to seduce me, his wife, his beloved ! Oh ! how base, how essentially selfish must be the sentiment that would sacrifice the peace, the hour of domestic love, to its own gratification. Oh ! Freville," she continued, in softer tones, " how was I deceived in my opinion of you under any emergency. Next to Sir Egbert, I would have confided in you as my dearest, most natural protector. I relied upon your honour as on that of an affectionate brother. In the unsuspecting simplicity of my heart, I sought your converse, and thought to win your thoughts to heaven ; and how have you rewarded me ? By the confession of the crimi-

nal passion that you now dare to offer as an excuse. You have degraded me in the eyes of my family, placed me in the power of a low-born, vicious domestic, cast a stigma on my children, and, greater woe than all ! grieved to the soul my honoured, beloved husband. Nor is that all, you have roused within me evil thought and passions, of whose very existence, but for you, I had remained in ignorance."

I attempted to grasp her hand, but she cried out :

" Miserable man ! let not your inordinate vanity deceive you. The evil I have to contend with is hatred, not love. Yes, Freville, from the night you so basely insulted me, followed as it was by so much disgrace and sorrow, my temper, naturally mild and equable, has changed, not so much from my own sufferings, as grief at seeing the noble-minded Sir Egbert led by your machinations to forget his dignity. Yes, I do feel that I could hate you, in despite of my Saviour's commands to love those that persecute me. It seems as if vice was infectious, and that you have inspired me with sin. Almighty God !" she cried, sinking on her knees and tossing her arms towards heaven, " do not desert me in this temptation. Let not this man teach me to forget your divine precepts."

She fell to the earth, overpowered by the ex-

cess of her emotion. There was a wildness in her looks—I trembled for her reason. I raised her gently in my arms, and she made no effort to resist. The most violent struggle to escape had not terrified me like her apathy. My parched tongue clove to the roof of my mouth as I attempted to utter some words. At the instant, I heard the sound of a horn and the cracking of a whip, announcing the rapid approach of the mail. Could I leave the unhappy Clara? I hesitated. Desperate wretch as I was, I would have staked my immortal soul to have restored her to the quiet of which I had so recklessly robbed her. She saw my hesitation. She uttered a low but very wild cry. Again she was on her knees, her arms grasped mine, her eyes overflowing with tears were turned upon me.

“Freville,” she said, “have some pity upon your victim; do not drive me to the awful crime of cursing you. Should my letter be of any avail, Sir Egbert even now is on his road to the Terrace. I may yet be happy. Think of my poor children, and fly this place for ever!” Again the horn sounded. “Away, away!” she cried, “another moment and it will be too late. See, we are already observed.”

I looked in the direction she pointed, and saw two of the gardener’s men intently watching us; but unfortunately for Lady Eastville, too distant

to hear our conversation. Grieved beyond measure at this discovery, I attempted to disentangle myself from her grasp, for she still clung to my knees.

“One moment, Freville,” she said, looking wistfully towards me, “I have a presentiment that this is the last interview we shall ever have in this world. It was very wicked and unchristian-like to think of cursing you; receive, then, my blessing, and with it my sincere forgiveness. It is God who grants me power to act thus by you. Oh, how infinite are his mercies!”

On saying these words, she arose, and rushing past me, in a moment was out of sight. I remained as if fastened to the earth, until roused by Doctor Jerold’s servant, who laying his hand on my shoulder, told me the coach waited at the stile. I sent him forward, and then, with my usual unreflecting folly, beckoned to the two gardener’s men to advance, and indiscreetly begged of them not to mention a word of the interview they had just witnessed between me and Lady Eastville; and to bribe their silence, I drew forth from my pocket some notes, and handed them five pounds each. I afterwards discovered they were a part of the money given to me by poor Clara, the night previous to my quitting the Terrace; indeed, everything seemed to combine against that unfortunate lady; and for many years

afterwards, such was my presumption, so great the Cimmerian darkness into which my soul had sunk, that I imputed all the evil that resulted from my irregulated passions and want of religious principles, to the fates or destinies; thus, like my father, making a 'scape-goat of the Providence I had offended.

I arrived in London without any other adventure; but my leg suffered greatly from the violent exercise and the uneasy attitude I was obliged to retain all day, as the coach was full, consequently I could not raise it. On reaching London, I removed to a small lodging in Piccadilly. Next morning I sent for Abernethy; his hasty, rough manner taught me to regret Jerold's kindness; but by my ill conduct I had separated myself from every sincere friend, and was now solely thrown upon the mercy of strangers. With stern decision, Abernethy told me that if I did not rigidly observe his directions, he would not attend. First, because he would not stake his character with an unmanageable patient; next, that he could not waste his time from those who might value it. From this matter-of-fact business I knew there was no alternative, and having a horror of losing my limb, I submitted with the best grace I could to his prescriptions.

Nothing could be more sad than my position at that period; stretched day after day upon a

hard couch, originally, I believe, stuffed with hay, with pillows, not of down, but of chicken quills, on which to rest my aching head, with no attendance, but what a sulky maid-of-all-work could spare from the household business, I had full leisure to reflect over my folly. Yet, selfish as I was, my greatest anxiety was to learn whether Sir Egbert had returned to the Terrace, and whether he had become reconciled to his lady. Our last interview had awakened in my mind, a strange conflict of contending thoughts. Never before had I witnessed Clara yield to the influence of any violent emotion; nay, even at the time I had so presumptuously confessed my love, I had scarcely indulged a shadow of hope. But during the excitement of our last interview, she had betrayed the burning passions which glowed beneath her calm exterior, proving that her placid manner originated in strong religious principles, not in constitutional coldness. True, she had vehemently declared that it was hatred, not love, she experienced towards me; but my vanity and hopes suggested that she was self-deceived in her sentiments, and that her fancied hatred sprung from the struggles of a passion she felt to be criminal. Truly, if at that period vanity was my besetting sin, it was also my consolation. There was I, day after day, stretched on my hard bed, in a miserable lodging,

serious apprehensions being entertained by Abernethy that I should lose my leg ; not a friend near, not a guinea to spare on comforts, not to say luxuries : yét I soothed and supported my mind with the fancy that the lovely, the noble, the religious Lady Eastville, was devotedly attached to me ; although, from the strength of her virtue, she would not admit the fact even to her own heart.

A day or two after my arrival in London, I had written to Doctor Jerold, inclosing Abernethy's certificate of my illness, and entreating him to write me a full account how matters proceeded at the Terrace. By return of post, I received the following answer, written in a scrawl, scarcely legible : it was evident the Doctor wrote under violent agitation.

“ Mr. Deerhurst,

“ Of the particulars of your last interview with Lady Eastville, I am in ignorance, or by what stratagem you managed to seduce her into it ; but its consequences have proved most unhappy ; and, I apprehend, it has instilled some suspicions against me into the mind of Sir Egbert, for, although his little girl is seriously ill, I am not in attendance ; on the contrary, have received an intimation that my future visits at the Terrace can be dispensed with. Mr. Deerhurst, I con-

sider that in having taken advantage of my hospitality, and of my chariot, to injure and insult a lady—who, in despite of appearances, I still consider innocent—that you have acted, to say the least, in a most ungentlemanly manner. I therefore decline all future acquaintance, or correspondence with you. Any letters you may address to me shall be returned unanswered, or flung unread into the fire.

“ROBERT JEROLD.”

The resentment, which at any other period I must have experienced at this letter, was lost in regret at the idea that Sir Egbert had discovered my last interview with Clara, as it must have increased his jealousy. I was greatly annoyed too at Jerold's being dismissed from the Terrace. I knew that, independent of his professional skill, Clara considered him as a sincere friend, and had given a proof of her confidence in his judgment, by acquainting him with my libertine attempt; then, the idea of not hearing the particulars, created a suspense so unbearable, that I fell into a slow, nervous fever, the restlessness arising from which was so great, that even the apprehension of losing my limb, could not detain me in one position, and I constantly sprang from my couch, and rushed up and down my narrow apartment for a few moments, when

excruciating bodily pain would again drive me to seek for rest. Moved by my evident sorrow, Abernethy took a kind interest in my fate, and his usually stern manner was softened.

I now wrote to Charles Mellish, who had joined the detachment of his regiment in York, entreating him, as he would save my reason—my life, to obtain all the information he could relative to the Eastville family, and to immediately acquaint me with every particular. I also expressed a wish to know, to what reports my adventure at the Terrace had given rise to in my corps, and in the neighbourhood. After despatching this letter, I became more composed; but my appetite was gone, and my rest broken: I was subdued to a state of the most pitiable weakness. Uncheered by society, no longer indulging in my criminal hope of seducing Lady Eastville; with no prospect before me but to join the service companies at Demerara, reduced in circumstances and strength, I scarcely thought it possible that I could ever sink into a lower state of misery. Alas! at that period, comparatively speaking, I knew sorrow only by its name. A week passed, and I might have received Mellish's answer, but it came not; another, and still no letter: my suspense amounted to torture. I would wring my hands with agony, and groan like one possessed. Another week was nearly expired, and all hope

of hearing anything relative to the Eastvilles had faded away, leaving my heart utterly desolate, when, one morning, the unusual sound—at that door—of a postman's rap, broke on my ear. To witness my emotion of delight, one might suppose that health, love, and happiness were to be contained in Mellish's answer. Again the quick, impatient rap sounded through the house: I shook my hand-bell, I tried to rise to rush to the hall door, but fell back from weakness and exhaustion. I heard, for a moment, the postman and maid disputing, then the door clapped to with violence, and no one came near me. My impatience amounted to frenzy: I shook the bell, and stamped—I shrieked. At length, the maid servant entered.

“My letter!” I exclaimed; “it was—it must be for me!”

“Is that all that ails you?” she gently answered. “I believe you are crazy to make such a row in the house. I thought you, at least, had broken your leg again. ’Tis well for you my mistress is out.”

“But the letter!” I exclaimed, as well as my quivering lips could utter, “what of that?”

“The letter is for you; but when my mistress went out, where could I get change to pay for it? And the postman would not wait till I came up to you: he said, forsooth, he had

been delayed too long already ; but he passes by this way at five o'clock in the evening, and he desired me to have the postage in my hand, so you need not be in such a fuss, 'tis eleven now, and at five you shall have the letter."

These six hours appeared to me as ages. Never did I feel my own circumstances so depressing : I had no servant to send after the postman—no strength to pursue him. I staggered to the window, and, though I knew my watching would not hasten five o'clock, and though the position of standing was agony, there I remained, with my watch in my hand, counting every tedious minute.

The wished for hour came ; I saw the postman approach ; how I got down stairs, I know not, but I reached the hall door, opened it, thrust the money into his hand, and snatching the letter, with incredible swiftness flew back to my apartment, and read the following strange epistle from Charles Mellish :

" York, Tuesday 21st.

" Dear Freville,

" In compliance with the request you have so energetically expressed, I should have written to you ere this, but only returned within the last few days from Worcester, and have since been much amused by the different accounts of your

adventure at the Terrace. You request of me to make every inquiry relative to Sir Egbert Eastville and his family. I assure you I have been most active on the subject, though with little success. You are aware that Sir Egbert, though so munificent in his hospitality to the neighbourhood, disliked forming military acquaintances, and never called on our corps till your good fortune, or bad horsemanship, introduced you into the very bosom of his family, when he condescended to leave his card at our mess. I have prowled about the neighbourhood, assiduously endeavouring to engage myself in conversation with any he or she whose appearance promised a love of scandal for its own sake, or who looked as though money might melt their taciturnity. Hopeless expedition ! Further, from your brother officers I could gain no particulars. However to gratify you, on Sunday last I rode to the little town of F——, where your friend Doctor Jerold resides ; and, as Eastville is in its parish, and the family attend its church, I thought it probable I might there glean some information ; nor have I been disappointed. By the bye, before I enter into a description of a scene I witnessed, I must amuse you with an account of some of the contradictory reports circulated of your scene with Lady Eastville. Deerhurst, it really was an act of charity to give the old maids and beaus of

this good city of York something to talk of; and you know charity covers a multitude of sins.

“It appears, to your confusion, that your last meeting with the lady took place in an old dilapidated ruin, near a kitchen garden. In the name of romance, and without romance, what is love?—How could you choose such a spot? I have heard of bowers of roses, banks of violets, and shady groves, as trysting places for such tender scenes; but cabbages, and turnips, and potatoes—faugh! faugh! it was the very annihilation of sentiment. No wonder that Cupid, the most fastidious of gods, should be revenged; and so he was, for it seems two of the cultivators of these vulgar necessities witnessed the scene, and, being grateful for the notes you so liberally handed them, swear lustily that you are really and truly a most virtuous young man, for they say that they saw their wicked mistress kneel at your feet, catching at the skirts of your coat, and that you shook her off just as they would a toad who presumed to crawl up their legs. In short, in the hamlet, among all Sir Egbert’s dependants, you are set up for an example of righteousness. Freville, they don’t know you quite so well as I do!

“Now in contradiction to this, Doctor Jerold has taken up the gauntlet for Lady Eastville, and, while he admits that appearances are against her,

declares her to be the purest, the fairest of created beings, and that you are neither more nor less than an abandoned villain. In short, the Doctor talks confounded nonsense; but some of the old dames have put on their wisest looks, speak their minds, and gently insinuate that it is not for nothing the Doctor is so willing to exonerate Lady Eastville. This skilful practitioner has hitherto borne the most unexceptionable character; but it is now remembered that gleams of avarice, from time to time, have been seen to shoot forth from him, and what more likely than that a bribe has secured his advocacy?

“You may conclude that your adventure is the only subject spoken of at the mess; and, while your moral rejection of Lady Eastville’s advances has won golden opinions from the unsophisticated inhabitants of the hamlet, it has awakened the ire and jealousy of your noble companions in arms. Old Colonel Chilli, who commands here at present, turns up his proboscis of a nose, and shouts out with his cracked, husky voice:

“It is all old-fashioned stuff!” And he further uttered more nonsense and absurdity than I choose to commit to paper; being as it is, *such* nonsense and absurdity in relation to this affair as I am certain your patience would not readily constrain you to read. Lieutenant Dolly, who, you know, is a great singer of canticles, takes another view of the sub-

ject. And then, ye gods ! how he does abuse the French. On the contrary, old Chilli supports them as a more tasty and accomplished people than the English ; and as accomplishments are more in vogue than morals, and as fashion is the presiding genius of the age, he upholds them as better worthy of our imitation ; and the whole mess are kept in roars of laughter by the violent and quaint manner in which these ancient sons of Mars carry on their disputes. However, enough of them for the present. I must return to Lady Eastville."

I have copied thus much of Mellish's letter, and had intended to lay the whole of it before the reader, but several considerations now prevail with me, and I desist. I shall give enough to show that the writer, although never so selfish and obdurate as myself, was at one time as reckless and unthinking. I shall tell enough in the sequel of the heroic generosity and disinterestedness of Mellish—more than enough, I sincerely trust, to win back for him that good opinion which, I cannot help thinking, the extracts I have already given and those that will presently follow, must cause him for the present to forfeit.

The passages in Mellish's letter which I have suppressed, contained what I may term a dramatic recital of observations, thoughtless remarks, and

heartless strictures, the recollection of which now fills me with horror. I must add, in justice to myself, that I did not read them at the time without emotions of strong disgust. It may be asked, wherefore—knowing full well, as I must have known, that when once the reputation of a woman, from whatever cause, becomes the object of suspicion, these consequences speedily follow, and form no small part of her punishment or her persecution ; knowing this, I say, it may be asked why I not only did not cease the pursuit of my criminal object, but hasten to make such reparation as it was yet in my power to make. I cannot reply. Mellish proceeded thus :

“ It appears that after you set off from the Terrace in the York coach, its fair mistress was slowly and pensively walking back to the house, her mind, no doubt, dwelling upon your cruel rejection of her; when who should appear before her but Sir Egbert. In consequence of a most penitential letter she had written to him, and in which her woman’s wit found an excuse for every indiscretion ; and at the entreaties of Dr. Coaltsley, the Rector of his parish, and his esteemed friend, he had been prevailed upon to return to his house. But it would appear the demon of jealousy had been allayed, not exorcised, and was ready to blaze forth on the least provocation. Imagine then what must have been his astonishment at

beholding his lady with her white robe all stained from kneeling at the feet of you, her virtuous, but most cruel lover. With her hair dishevelled, and her looks expressive of dismay, there she stood, 'all tattered and torn, like the maid all forlorn,' without making one effort to speak to him, or welcome him back. All this led to renewed inquiries. The workmen, acquiring consequence from being brought forward to bear witness against their mistress, in their own strong language described the scene, and to prove their veracity and your generosity, produced the notes you had given them. This in itself was a sufficient proof that such bribery must be to disguise guilt. Now, Freville, of all the wonders, mine is the greatest to know how you came to be so flush of cash. In vain poor Lady Eastville attempted to speak; in vain the knees so lately bent to you knelt before her obdurate husband, as she wildly asserted her innocence; the proofs of guilt were too strong. He spurned her from him with the fury of a savage, vowing never again to see her; commanding that under no excuse she should presume to address him; then mounting his beautiful Lady Cora, fled, as I understand, to some secluded lodge he has in the mountains.

"Hapless Lady Eastville! all this came from your not being a heroine; then you might have

knelt in the cabbage garden, nay, in the potatoe ridges, and your garment have remained white as unsunned snow, and the elements of air and water have passed over your hair, and it still would have fallen about your face in the most becoming fashion ; and you would have danced forward, harp in hand, to salute Sir Egbert. But how different had been your fate ! for then your conjugal re-union would have been a scene of harmony. Well, positively there is no resisting bad habits. I commenced this letter with the full intention of describing a scene I had witnessed in the Church of Saint Mary's, and I have not as yet arrived at it.

“I left York very early ; it was a splendid morning, like an April one, now sunshine, now showers. I breakfasted at the inn, and while discussing my meal, demanded of the waiter what news he had of the Terrace. He said every person considered Lady Eastville guilty ; that her little girl was then dangerously ill, and that a physician from York was attending her, Doctor Jerold being forbidden by Sir Egbert to go near the Terrace ; also that Sir Egbert had taken his eldest son with him ; but from a belief that the youngest Herbert was not his, refused to see him. Moreover, it was reported that he had already commenced measures for a divorce ! Why, Freville, this going

before Doctors' Commons will give *éclat* not only to yourself, but to our whole corps.

“ Having breakfasted, I went to saunter about, when a shower coming on, I entered the church, though it was some time ere the service was to commence. I was scarcely seated, when I saw a lady of a commanding carriage, very plainly dressed and veiled, walk, or rather, quickly glide up the aisle, and enter the Eastville pew. She was followed by an attendant, leading a child. Had any doubts of this being Lady Eastville occurred, they must have been satisfied by the glances of the female part of the congregation, and the winking and grinning of the men.

“ Soon after the service began, and the first lesson was nearly over, when who should walk in, with head erect, his stern brow and haughty bearing, but Sir Egbert; with him were a tall, stiff, awkward-looking old lady, his aunt, as I have since learned, and his eldest son, a fair, lovely boy. Every eye was immediately turned on them; people actually stood up to stare as he entered his pew, little expecting to have it preoccupied by his lady; but unfortunately for our curiosity its closely-drawn curtains prevented the possibility of observing what passed within. But from that, farewell to devotion; the prayers, indeed, proceeded, with all decorum, and the grave looks of the Rev. Mr. Coaltsley in some degree checked the whis-

pering and grimaces of his flock; but had Saint Paul preached, and Saint Peter prayed before the congregation, they would not have commanded their attention from the Eastvilles.

“When the service concluded, several persons quitted the church, others remained within. Among the former, all too much agitated to communicate, were the whole of the Eastville party; though it appears, poor Lady Eastville, who like all sinners is now turning Magdalen, had only left her sick couch for the purpose, little expecting to meet her grim Lord, whose appearance at St. Mary’s was owing to his chariot breaking down as he was proceeding to York.

“Freville, it would require the pencil of a Hogarth to describe the scene that now ensued in the vestibule of the church, where the congregation were detained by a violent thunder-storm accompanied by the heaviest rain I ever remember. Lady Eastville leant back in the shade of a pillar, her veil closely drawn, she seemed scarcely to breathe; not a person deigned to salute her. You would suppose she bore a plague-spot about her person, from the manner in which her own sex shrank from her. The bold looks of gallantry with which we military would have honoured her were checked by the dignified carriage of Sir Egbert, who, while he stood there impatiently waiting for his chariot, looked as stiff and unbending

as our drill sergeant, and as ferocious as an Othello; in truth, there was a look of wildness and despair in his countenance, that in spite of my levity, I commiserated him, and felt my spirit rise with indignation against the woman who had brought such misery and disgrace upon him; for as to condemning a fine dashing young officer, like you, Freville, or myself, in an affair of gallantry, that is all fudge.

“The thunder passed off, and the carriages drove up, but the rain continued as violent as ever. Sir Egbert’s chariot was announced. The stately old aunt whispered something to him, and then without waiting for an answer, stepped hastily forward, and I must say, with much kindness of manner drew Lady Eastville’s arm under hers to lead her forward, when Sir Egbert, setting his teeth like a tiger, and stamping with his right foot, waved her back. What he said I could not hear, from the violent sobbing of the elder boy, who had been gazing at his mother the whole time, and weeping bitterly, not daring to approach her; but Lady Eastville tottered back to her pillar, against which she flung her arm for support, and sunk on the ground, not one of the many present, offering her any assistance. Sir Egbert then made his exit, actually dragging out his son and aunt. They had only just driven off, when the Rev. Dr. Coaltsley, accompanied by

Doctor Jerold, and followed by the remainder of his flock, came out from the interior of the church.

“ Upon seeing Lady Eastville’s position, the whole truth rushed upon Jerold’s mind. In a moment he was at her side, raising her in his arms, and removing her thick veil, gave to view a countenance of such death-like paleness, that the most straight-laced of her sex gave a shudder of horror. I know not what might be their feelings, but certainly a change came over mine. With a happy versatility of temper, I condemned Sir Egbert as a hard-hearted, jealous tyrant, who cruelly and unjustly persecuted his tender and loving spouse. Mr. Coaltsley hastened to the vestry-room for some wine, and by his and the Doctor’s attentions, Lady Eastville soon revived from her insensibility. She had borne up against the scornful and sneering whispers of the assembly like a heroine ; but kindness seemed to affect her, and pressing the hands of both the gentlemen, she wept long and bitterly.

“ An old dowager, a Lady Delmore, I think, who seemed much affected, now approached, and requested of Lady Eastville to accept of her carriage to return home. And oh ! for the dignity of poor, contemptible, human nature, no sooner had she done so, than the whole tide of opinion turned in Lady Eastville’s favour ; and she who a

moment before had sunk unpitied on the ground, might now have commanded all their attention ; not that they thought her less guilty—but a person of high rank had noticed her. Ere entering Lady Delmore's carriage, she turned back and addressed Mr. Coaltsley ; in doing so she appeared much agitated, and a bright blush overspread her face, rendering it exquisitely beautiful.

“ ‘ I have to thank you, Doctor Coaltsley,’ she said in quivering accents, ‘ for the protection you have just now afforded me from the contempt and neglect with which I have been most unjustly treated. Your conduct has been that of a Christian ; that of a minister of Him who came to call sinners to repentance ; and more or less, we all sin. I feel a strong conviction that I shall never again enter this church. Could I have foreseen this day, to how many malignant and irregular passions my appearance would give rise, much as I wished to hear the word of God in prayer, I had not come here ; it befitteth not a Christian woman to tempt others to sin. Of the foul deed of which I am accused, I am as innocent as my babe, even in thought ; nor do I on that subject deserve any merit, as there was for me no temptation. I am fully aware that in some degree I have acted thoughtlessly, nay giddily, and from a natural timidity of character, I have yielded too much to others ; had I in the beginning exerted a

little more spirit, matters had not gone so far. But all regrets for the past are superfluous. Appearances, alas ! are strongly against me, yet as I have ever been taught to esteem highly public opinion, as I consider it a duty I owe to my husband, to my children, and above all, to the memory of my beloved father, to remove this foul stigma from my name ; and as, with a very few exceptions, this congregation have thought fit, even here in the house dedicated to God, to pour publicly upon me the full vial of their scorn, I shall now, with your permission, approach yonder altar, and then, in the performance of the most sacred rite of my religion, solemnly attest my innocence.’

“ ‘ Dear Lady Eastville,’ said Mr. Coaltsley, and he spoke in a soothing voice, ‘ I have never thought you guilty. I am fully aware how hard you have for years struggled to fight the good fight, to take up the cross, and casting behind all lesser things, you have indeed chosen the better part. And if worldly affections have sometimes proved too strong for your human nature, yet you have never removed your hopes from that land of promise, that ark of rest and bliss which lies beyond the grave. Dear Lady Eastville, at this moment you are much agitated, and—forgive the strong truth—your excitement proceeds from feelings solely connected with this world. You have

been harshly treated ; your indignation has been roused by the stern severity of Sir Egbert, your pride awakened by the contemptuous treatment of these,' waving his hand towards a group of ladies. 'Such is not the state in which to approach the altar of your God. Let not then the insults of these people lead you into sin. Of what regard to you is the whole world, if you lose your own soul? Lady Eastville, you are reserved for better things. Exert your naturally fine understanding, recal the precepts of your father—he was a Christian in more than words—then in a few days I shall hope to see you kneel at that altar, not influenced by worldly passion, but in meek humility, forgiving, as a sinful mortal should, those who have offended you, and hoping forgiveness from him that hath no sin.'

" ' Bless you, bless you, for your advice,' she exclaimed. ' How hard it is to avoid sin, when the Evil One assumes so many forms to seduce us ! I had persuaded myself that my enthusiasm to approach the altar was a tribute of respect to God, not a feeling of resentment to beings like myself. But you have judged rightly.'

" Having uttered these words, she permitted Doctor Jerold to place her in Lady Delmore's carriage, in which the old dowager had patiently waited. No sooner had it driven off, than the reverend parson, taking advantage of several of

his congregation being confined within the holy precincts of the church by the continued rain, began to lecture them ; and being greatly excited, for it seems he is a sincere friend of the East-villes, he spoke with more energy than he generally exerts. Having first called out in a loud voice, I suppose by way of a text, ‘ He that is without sin among you, let him cast a stone at her,’ he descanted on the heinousness of scandal, and the want of Christian charity in too readily imputing blame to others. Seeing some of his saintly flock look very prim, he exclaimed, ‘ Suppose not for a moment that I mean to uphold or excuse adultery, a vice so terrible in its results ; far from it : the laws of God, of nature, and of man, justly award punishment to the crime. In earlier times, the most painful death was pronounced on the adulteress, while shame and sorrow were the inheritance of her children ; and if a more lenient age is less severe in its decrees, still in the eyes of God the crime is equally culpable ; for the great Spirit of Truth is not to be altered or deceived by human institutions. But the more serious the charge, the more slow we should be in the accusation. Saint Paul ranks envying and revilings among our most deadly sins ; and perhaps at no period were these crimes more general or destructive in their effects. At present, however, as time presses, I shall only

mention one of its many evils : it destroys our belief in virtue, and our respect for our own species. Whenever a love of scandal, or indiscriminate censure of others is admitted into a family, it gradually undermines their morals. Youth accustomed to hear the conduct of their acquaintances censured, gradually lose their horror of vice, by imperceptible degrees, and naturally feel less compunction in practising it ; and again, the secret consciousness of their own immorality renders them doubtful of the existence of virtue in others ; and thus dissimulation, suspicion, and jealousy are introduced, destroying the confidence and love so necessary to form domestic happiness. In answer to this, you may say : if the culprit is guilty, is she to be again received within the pale of society, and merely be told, ‘ Go, and sin no more ?’

“ ‘ No, no, vice should never be upheld ; for independent of every other motive, it were an evil precedent ; but on that very account, none should be condemned without sufficient proof. It were setting aside the noblest act of our legislature, and adopting the darkest error of Spain’s Inquisition :—an error which, by awakening the indignation and inquiry of enlightened Europe, first undermined the mighty fabric of Rome’s proud hierarchy. But even when the culprit is guilty, why torture the victim, and

triumph in its agony? It is setting aside the most beautiful doctrines of Christ, whose divine miracles were all practised in works of mercy and charity. Incapable of sin in his own nature, he never rejected the supplications of the afflicted penitent, but declared that he came to call sinners to repentance. Oh! ye of little faith, how have you this day acted? You have shunned and insulted a most unhappy lady, who, for upwards of four years, has lived among you in the practice of every Christian virtue, and that on the mere report of a low-bred menial, supported by a few trivial circumstances. Far from following your Saviour's precept, as given in my text, there was not one of you who, overlooking your own sins, would not have cast a stone at Lady Eastville, till you raised a cairn to mark for future ages her supposed guilt, and the stern punishment you awarded.

“‘Now, hear my resolution: I am your pastor, long—too long, has this parish been notorious for its love of scandal, and I admit that I have been too slothful in tracing its source; but from henceforth, the most malignant of you shall not accuse me of carelessness on that head, for wheresoever I hear its echo, I will spare no pains to trace its origin, and, according to the power granted by Ecclesiastical law, will submit its author to castigation.’

“With these words, he coldly saluted his congregation, and retired with Doctor Jerold. His flock soon followed his example, and went home to digest his sermon with what appetite they might; but I answer for it, Mr. Coaltsley will never again be a popular preacher. You may guess that my account of this scene afforded high amusement at the mess. Old Chilli’s fancy was so tickled at the idea of fat Mrs. Peakly being bumped up and down in the ducking-stool, that he actually invited us all to sup with him on a lobster salad and champagne. You must know Mrs. Peakly has five daughters, of different complexions, sizes, and ages, all solicitous to enter into the holy bonds of matrimony. Surely amidst such a variety, men’s fancies should be pleased: so thinks the provident mother, and, for that purpose, she has been most liberal of her hospitalities to our corps; and to exalt these,—her maidens,—above their fellows, she has used the rancour of her tongue in abusing every other woman, married or single, in the city of York, or its neighbourhood, for ten miles round. Could she have heard our remarks, as inspired by the champagne, I believe even the perspective hope of marrying some of her daughters, would not tempt her to repeat her entertainments to us gallant sons of Mars; but this, as far as we go, is of no consequence, for we have received orders

for the south of Ireland. I believe Limerick will be our head-quarters. I leave this to-morrow with the first detachment ; but as I have applied for leave of absence, hope soon to return to England, when you shall hear from me, and if I can be of any service, command me.

“Remember, Freville, if there are parts of my letter which you consider smack too much of levity, I only follow your example in adopting the strain. Moreover, I thought this way of handling the subject, at least in parts, would be most acceptable to you. I must tell you, though, in sober seriousness, that the scene in the church very deeply affected me, and has made such an impression upon me, that it is not without reluctance I despatch this (in part) flippant missive.

“To-morrow your dressing-case and luggage shall be forwarded by the coach to London. Take a friend’s advice, and be careful of your leg : it would be a greater loss than anything else in Europe, for you could never replace it, except by a wooden one ; and so, Freville, farewell.

“CHARLES MELLISH.”

On reading this type of Charles Mellish’s genius, every former sentiment yielded to grief and indignation at hearing of the sneering contempt and ribaldry to which Lady Eastville, the purest, the noblest of her sex was exposed, by my mad folly ; and I hastily resolved, let the

consequences be ever so fatal, to set off on the following day for Yorkshire, demand a meeting with Sir Egbert, unequivocally acknowledge all the facts of my presumption, and then refuse his challenge, though by so doing I should be hooted out of my regiment as a coward, and be a target for the finger of scorn to point at.

Having formed this resolution, I fancied myself more resigned, and attempted to lie down, for my leg was frightfully swollen ; but there was an oppression on my breathing :—the image of Clara, banished from her home, and her name bandied about in the public courts, pressed on my heart ; again, a sensation as if my head was a ball of fire seized me. I have a recollection of springing from the couch, uttering frantic cries. Once or twice I heard the door open, and saw faces peeping in. I had a strange idea that they were collecting all the air from the room, and leaving me to be suffocated. I called piteously to them to stop, then bounding to the window, shattered it to atoms.

After a while, Abernethy, accompanied by the lady of the house, entered. Whatever that great man might have been to others, he ever treated me with kindness ; perceiving that the illness, so long lurking in my veins, had turned into a brain fever, with great tenderness, he pressed me to go to bed, promising that if I complied with his

request, he would himself accompany me to Yorkshire on the following day, for I raved about setting off immediately. Having, at length, succeeded in tranquillizing me, he retired, sending an apothecary to remain with me all night. My fever was so severe, that for three weeks my recovery was considered doubtful. That period formed a blank in my existence.

On the first day of returning consciousness, I remember suffering from intense thirst; my tongue actually clove to the roof of my mouth. I moaned, and made an effort to put out my hand in search of some drink, but fell back from debility. I had no other sensation, no recollection of the past. Often remaining for some time in this state, I heard a number of voices in the room:—to my shattered nerves they appeared tremendously loud. My next perception was that of being raised up, laid upon something flat, and carried down stairs; then a gush of cold air passed over my face, more fully reviving me. On the instant, a horrible idea seized me—they supposed me dead, and were going to bury me alive! I tried to scream; but the anguish of my mind rendered me speechless; then I struggled to move my limbs, this effort threw me into a convulsion, and again all consciousness vanished.

It was a week from this, as I afterwards learned,

when I awoke out of a long and refreshing slumber; the crisis of my fever had passed, and I was pronounced convalescent; my ideas were less confused, but still I had no recollection of any circumstance beyond having been very ill. My strength was so far returned that I was able to move my position; no sooner had I done so, than some person advanced, raised my head, handed me a delicious draught, and then arranged my pillows. Again I slept for several hours: on awakening I drew back my curtain to see if any one was near. Imagine my astonishment at finding myself not in my sordid lodging in Piccadilly, but in a most sumptuous apartment whose large windows were shaded by draperies of green silk; my bed in the form of a canopy was hung with the same rich material, while in place of the chicken quills, my head was supported on cushions of down. On a table near me were beautiful filagree baskets of silver with the most delicious fruits, and at a short distance, I observed a quakerly-looking woman engaged in reading. On hearing me stir she advanced, offered me some mixture which I drank, then laying a basket of grapes next to my hand, glided from the apartment.

All this time I never spoke, for I felt persuaded that I laboured under some illusion resulting from my late illness, and feared to dispel it.

A few moments after I heard a hasty step advance, and Charles Mellish stood before me. I attempted to raise myself; he pushed me back gently and affectionately shook my hand, exclaiming: "No fear of you now, Freville, if you only take care of yourself; however, you were nearly off the hooks. Thanks to Abernethy, you will soon be yourself again. A clever old boy that Abernethy, I can tell you!"

"But, Mellish, I think that I am still suffering from delirium, all here appears strange to me," I remarked.

He sat on the side of the bed, saying: "Now keep quiet, and you shall hear of your good fortune. Old Sir Roger has at length gone to his last account, to appear before a tribunal where his lac of rupees will be but dust in the balance, when put in the scales against his lack of virtue."

"In pity's sake!" I exclaimed, starting up, "explain yourself; is Sir Roger dead and has he at length done me justice?"

"Lie down and compose yourself, and I will just acquaint you with the leading facts; when you are quite recovered, Mr. Moneymore will, of course, give you a full detail of the particulars. You must know that for some time back, what with good living, a bad conscience and the heat of the climate, Sir Roger's health was rapidly fading;

but none dare presume to tell the rich man that the great destroyer had marked him as an early prey. However, feeling his spirits and strength declining, he strove to renovate them by a succession of company and amusements. It seems on the tenth of last April, some eight months ago, it being the birth-day of his beloved son Etienne, who had just attained his three-and-twentieth year, Sir Roger gave a magnificent entertainment, to which all the neighbourhood of Pondicherry were invited. In the evening some of the youths sat down to play; among these was Etienne, who you have often heard was a fine spirited youth, and possessed of great personal strength and beauty; but it appears he was much addicted to gambling, and of a haughty, unyielding temper. In the course of the game a violent dispute arose: Etienne accused a Frenchman, of the name of de Ligny, of some dishonourable proceeding; an immediate duel was the consequence, and both the young men, it is said were intoxicated; however, that may be, ere they were separated, Etienne was mortally wounded, and survived but a few days, and his antagonist de Ligny so severely, as to leave his recovery doubtful. The shock of this event affected Sir Roger to such a degree, that he was seized with a fit, and expired within two weeks after his son's decease. By his last testament, although

he had left the principal part of his wealth to Etienne, the old Nabob provided amply for you. However, that is now of no consequence, for Etienne having made no disposition of his wealth, you come in as heir-at-law to the vast possessions of your grandfather."

"Yes," I exclaimed with bitterness, "and a small portion of that wealth being granted to my unfortunate parents might have altered both their destinies,—for the struggles of poverty led in a great measure to their early deaths."

"However," said Mellish, "you should not be severe on the old fellow, for you can see by his will he left you a noble fortune."

"Ay," I cried, "because he could not take it with him to his grave; probably if he had lived, he would have murmured at purchasing my promotion."

"Well, Freville, don't agitate your weak frame by this emotion; it would not do to quit the world just as your prospects have become so brilliant."

"All this time, Mellish," I said, "you have not explained where I am. Is this house a part of my present possessions?"

"Oh, true!" he answered laughing, "you know, Freville, how often you amused me with an account of Mr. Moneymore's reception of you, when from your respectable lodging, a garret in Oxford

Street, and clad in rather seedy garments you presumed to call on the great man in his great house. Now hear and venerate the power of gold ; no sooner did he receive intelligence, by an express from the Pondicherry agent, of Sir Roger's death, and your being sole heir, than he became instantly enlightened to your merit. You were no longer a presuming, troublesome youth, importuning him with applications to his respected and noble employer. No, you were an amiable, handsome, accomplished person, who had been shamefully and cruelly maltreated by Sir Roger, a cold-hearted, selfish old Nabob. Then to leave one of your merit amidst the noise of Piccadilly, and with such wretched accommodation was out of the question ; so the moment Abernethy considered you able to be removed, you were conveyed here to this house, and treated as one who has the power of returning kindness, not as a poor devil like me, who must carve out his fortune with his good sword."

I joined Mellish in his hearty laugh, and then abused Moneymore for his cringing spirit, and love of gain. Avarice not being my own passion I was very severe in condemning it in others ; however, I had no idea of depriving him of my agency. First, I hated trouble, and was quite incompetent for business ; then in despite of his foppery and selfishness, he was strictly honour-

able in money matters, and very independent in his circumstances. I already began to feel myself a man of consequence, a patron of others. Heretofore from infancy I had had to struggle with sordid means, but now I had the sole command of immense wealth. How far I was worthy of the fortune thus placed in my keeping, the future events of this memoir will best prove.

CHAPTER IV.

SEE me now recovered from my fever, my leg, from having been so long kept quiet, being perfectly restored to its usual form and strength—master of a baronetcy and one of the richest commoners in England; and how did I feel upon this accession of power—for wealth is power! Not one thanksgiving did I offer up at the throne of grace for my recovery, not one plan did I form for the improvement, or good of poor suffering humanity! Some gleams of ambition did indeed cross my mind, but they all tended towards my own aggrandizement, towards the gratification of a contemptible, low-thinking, selfish vanity; these were but passing thoughts. With restored health, my ardent love of Clara returned; she was my constant dream by night, my sole engrossing theme by day, when I could command the company of Mellish, who with a kind of reckless good nature, humoured my passion; and as he was persuaded that Lady Eastville loved me, and in his youth and thoughtlessness, was very far from taking into account the moral consequences of

such actions ; on the contrary, as his prepossessions were, "all for love, or the world well lost," he strongly encouraged me to make another attempt to gain upon her affections.

"Worse than lose you cannot," thus he argued ; "believe me, no matter how good and wise people may be, wealth and rank always raise their possessors in the opinions of others ; over women they are particularly influential ; besides, while you were poor you had no power to act boldly ; now you are rich you possess the means. I frankly confess to you, were it my own case, I would not hesitate a moment. Here is a woman to whom you have been devotedly attached from your childhood, who was aware of your passion before she ever saw or heard of her present husband, this cold, haughty, and, therefore, unloveable Sir Egbert Eastville. She must have given you encouragement, or a fellow of your discernment would not have left her after her father's death with the full persuasion that your love was returned."

I interrupted him, saying : "In pity to me, spare this tirade, and advise relative to Lady Eastville, who I solemnly swear is innocent."

"If so, Freville, and that she possesses one spark of spirit, she must feel resentment against Sir Egbert, who has acted with unprecedented cruelty ; not satisfied with separating from her, and trying to put the impress of shame upon her in-

nocent boy, Herbert, he has refused, even at the entreaties of his own friends to let Lady Eastville see her little daughter, whom at a great risk to her life he removed from under her maternal care, and who is supposed to be in a rapid consumption. Distracted at the child's danger, the hapless lady submitted quietly to this tyranny, on condition that Doctor Jerold should be permitted to attend the dear invalid."

"Monster!" I exclaimed; "dared he to refuse that request?"

"He certainly did at first," said Mellish; "but I have since heard that Jerold is in attendance, and entertains no hope of the child's recovery."

This intelligence afflicted me deeply, for I knew how tenderly Clara loved her little girl; however, passing over the many conversations Mellish held on the subject, and the fears and hopes which distracted me, I shall at once detail the extraordinary act of which I was guilty—from which, when I now look back, I shrink with horror. I must have been either a madman or a fool, or as an old Irish servant of ours—Peggy Maher, would have said, 'The devil must have had possession of me intirely.' Impelled by a vanity so inordinate that a rational mind can scarcely admit its belief, I had persuaded myself that, in spite of Clara's contempt and rejection—both before and after her marriage—of my impor-

tunate advances, she passionately loved me, but had strength sufficient to subdue her feelings to her duties. I flattered myself that Sir Egbert's unjust and stern jealousy, by awakening her resentment, would lessen her respect for him. I had become so indurated that I actually rejoiced her little girl was dying, as the thoughts of deserting her or an apprehension of the stigma ever cast on the daughter of a *divorcée* might form a barrier to her eloping with me. The wild project I had in view, even at this distant period, makes me tremble when I think of my temerity and its awful results. I madly wrote to Clara a letter fully expressive of my passionate tenderness, expatiated on the great wealth of which I had just come into possession, bitterly regretting that I had not gained it ere her fate was irrevocably united with that of the cruel tyrant, Sir Egbert. I then elaborately spoke of our power of setting him and his authority at defiance, and flying to some southern clime, where, in the enjoyment of every luxury, we might despise the cold contempt of English society; or if its echo should reach and displease her, how we could remove to that distant land, where amidst the voluptuous pleasures of the East, a thousand slaves should watch to anticipate her slightest wish; nor was this all: I dwelt on the raptures that awaited us when we lived solely for each other, adding that Herbert, her

best beloved boy, should accompany us, and be only second to her adored self in my affections. In conclusion, I said,

“ I know, Clara, that from your extreme delicacy and mistaken prejudices you will at first be startled at the boldness of this request. I do not hurry you, my love, so weigh in your mind every circumstance; remember on the one side you remain a condemned wife, neglected, despised and exposed to all the mortification of insults such as you received in the Church of Saint Mary’s—the very description of which almost deprived me of reason—besides, in the society of your neighbourhood you would never again be received, nor indeed in any part of England, with the same respect as a few weeks since you commanded. Whereas, on the other hand, if you will fly with me you shall be removed from those vexations, and surrounded by all the pomp and luxuries of life, adored, nay worshipped by one who could never, even in idea, form a wish of happiness unconnected with you; then the very love which has proved your enemy will be your friend, by making you my wife. Oh, Clara! the prospect of your being solely mine fills me with an ecstasy which seems a foretaste of Heaven. It may be that from timidity you will hesitate to answer this, so, my love, I shall not press you on

the subject, nor—though to my impatience every day which separates us appears an age—shall I hurry you ; but on this day three weeks, on the 24th of December, I will call at the Terrace about three in the forenoon, I know that is the hour when your servants are engaged, and should you, my soul's idol, consent to fly with me, a sincere friend upon whose honour I can confide will have a chariot-and-four in readiness near the stile where the York coach passes. It will soon bear us away from the scene of your present mortification ; as to our destination, that depends upon your own wishes. I live but to love, to obey, to serve you, my worshipped one.

“Yours for ever,

“FREVILLE DEERHURST.”

Mellish, who at this period was full of unreflecting levity, and mad after frolic and adventure, readily proposed to be, as he termed it, Cupid's Mercury. After giving him numerous charges about having the letter delivered in the safest and most private manner, I committed it to his care, for, unacquainted with what measures Sir Egbert's jealousy had adopted, I dared not venture on the public post, and, infatuated as I was, could not presume to send Mellish to the Terrace. The next day saw him depart on his extraordinary

mission with as much pleasure as if it secured my success.

It were useless to enlarge upon my feelings after his departure. In our wisdom, we had concluded that if Lady Eastville despised my overtures, she would instantly write an indignant refusal, if not, her silence gave consent. Thus I dreaded in place of wishing for an answer.

A few days elapsed, and then I heard from Mellish, who wrote in high spirits. He had travelled direct from London to the town of F——, where, as already mentioned, the scene had taken place in St. Mary's Church, and immediately proceeded to the post-office, which, being kept at a book-seller's, was a lounge for all idlers. He had not been long there, when a footman in the Eastville livery entered, and demanded of the office-keeper were there any letters for the Terrace, remarking, "Mrs. Waller requested that you would not detain me, as her Ladyship expects some of consequence."

Mellish in a careless tone inquired, "had Sir Egbert returned to the Terrace?"

The footman stared at him, and then replied :
"No, Sir ; but we hope he soon may."

Mellish, then by a *coup-de-main*, took Lady Eastville's letter from the office-keeper, slipping mine in its place. Unsuspicious of the trick, the

messenger immediately departed; Mellish then employed the postman to select some books. While so engaged, he threw back Lady Eastville's letter without looking at the place from which it was directed; and, proud of his success, hurried into the reading-room to acquaint me with what he had done.

"Freville," he wrote, "this lucky chance of forwarding your letter without delay, augurs well to your hopes. It would be an act of madness, and, in place of your figuring as a gallant, gay Lothario, your friends would be for locking you up in a lunatic asylum,—a bad way to enjoy Sir Roger's accumulated wealth;—altogether I have to congratulate myself that there was no delay, for an express arrived this morning which obliges me to set off for Worcester, where an aunt of mine is on the point of death. However, under any emergency, you may depend upon my active friendship; consequently, if in the mean time I do not hear from you, on the 24th of December, according to previous arrangements, I shall have all in preparation for your elopement with this Circe."

It was but a few days after Mellish had quitted London, that I received this letter, and it wanted upwards of a fortnight of the time I had fixed for calling upon Clara. How often, during the interim, did I curse myself for not having de-

manded an immediate interview. Positively my anxiety every time the postman knocked, lest he might bring a refusal from her, amounted to insanity. The tedious fortnight at length passed, and no letters came ; thus she had tacitly consented to my views. I made arrangements with Mr. Moneymore for the immediate command of an immense sum of money ; purchased some of the most splendid jewellery in London ; for in all things I tried to assimilate the more exalted mind of Clara to my ostentatious vanity, and then set off for F——, in a tumult of spirits to which no words can give expression.

I travelled in the mail as far as York ; on stopping there I found a few lines from Mellish, saying that by four on Friday evening—it was then Thursday—he would expect me near the stile. He had discovered a convenient hollow just below it where the chariot could stand unobserved, and boasted that he had engaged four of the fleetest steeds in England, and a pair of trusty Pats, who would drive us to the devil if we fancied, and all by the way of fun. In short, his note was written in high glee, and with true Irish imprudence.

I slept that night at York, and next day rode off to F——. Although I had but few acquaintances in the town, still, from the apprehension of meeting any person who might recognize me,

more particularly Doctor Jerold, I did not venture to the inn, but, dismissing my horse—which was a hired one—strolled up the street in the direction which led to the Terrace; but I had not proceeded far, when I was overtaken by a sharp shower of sleet. This might have been expected, as the weather was intensely cold and gloomy. I hurried into a confectioner's shop, which was near, and, ordering some refreshments, requested to be shown a private apartment. They ushered me into one where there was a cheerful fire; I tried to drink some wine and water, but my agitation was so powerful I could not swallow. In another hour my suspense would be ended, and I should either be the accepted lover of Clara, or banished from her for ever. A quarter of an hour thus passed, and, although the sleet still continued, I was preparing to go, when I heard a horse stop at the door, followed by a stir in the shop, then a voice cried out:—

“This way, Sir Egbert; you will find a fire and refreshments in this apartment.”

Oh! how my coward heart shrunk with shame and consternation at the idea of meeting him. I looked about to find some escape; there was none, so as a last resource, I rushed to the window, and hid myself behind the curtains. All this was the act of a moment; the next Sir Egbert entered, and flung himself into the seat I had

just vacated, but for some time I was too much excited to observe him, though from my position I had the power, without being seen.

He had turned towards the table on which his arms rested, his face buried in his hands. Near him, with a frightened look, stood the young girl who attended the shop; neither spoke, when suddenly he roared out, "Where is the brandy? I asked for brandy." She pointed to the bottles on a distant table, and ran off; he rose, approached it, and I had a full view of his countenance. Would to Heaven I had not seen it! for never can I forget its haggard expression, or the unearthly glare of his eyes as they glanced wildly around. He filled out a glass of brandy, swallowed it, then drank off another, dashed some money on the table, and quitted the shop. In a few moments after, I saw him gallop off on his bay hunter, the same he rode on the day he had saved my life, and had me conveyed to his house. I watched the direction he took: it was the one opposite to the Terrace.

I did not witness this scene, nor the change in Sir Egbert, without deep emotion. Good Heaven, I thought, can that miserable-looking man, indulging in low intoxication, be the moral, dignified, noble, Sir Egbert Eastville—the very pattern of a polished gentleman, whom a few weeks since I saw surrounded by friends, and by his lovely lady

and children, of whom he was so justly proud and fond. Drops of agony rolled down my forehead, as conscience whispered "yes," and thou art the fell destroyer, the wretch who, to a degrading passion, has sacrificed his peace and happiness, and forfeited thy soul's repose. These reflections were intolerable; I started up, rung impatiently for the attendant, and, assuming a careless tone, said, "Is Sir Egbert Eastville at present staying at the Terrace?"

She answered in a tone of surprise,

"La, Sir! no. I thought every person knew that he never resided there since his lady put up with the strange officer."

"But I am a stranger," I said, "a friend of Sir Egbert's, and wish to know all the particulars of the business."

"La, Sir, it is so melancholy," she answered; as she curtsied for the money I handed her; "and I can tell you all about it, for I am the niece of Mr. Walter, Sir Egbert's butler. You must know"—

Before she could proceed, company entered, and she was called away. The clock over the mantel-piece chimed the half-hour, in another I should be with Clara; what need, then, for inquiring? so I hurried off, without waiting for further information.

Although not raining at the time, the clouds

looked so dark and heavy, it appeared as if every moment they would burst forth, and there was a cold, sweeping wind. All this was a matter of congratulation, as it rendered me less open to observation; and as I pressed onward, I strove to banish the recollection of Sir Egbert by the anticipation of again meeting Clara, and the unbounded happiness I should enjoy in her society; but in vain. There was an oppression on my heart, and a terrible foreboding of woe. As I ascended a small hillock which interrupted the private path I had chosen, I saw, but at a great distance, the chariot which was to bear Clara and me from the Terrace. It moved slowly; Mellish's active friendship, it appeared, had anticipated the time. Perhaps, discovering it, he proceeded at a quiet pace, at once to elude observation, and not to have the horses kept standing in the cold. This conclusion seemed satisfactory, and the sight of my preparations for the event exhilarated my spirits, and with lighter steps I bounded forward till I reached the house. How like a thief I looked and felt as I stood trembling with downcast eyes at the door, summoning up courage to demand entrance into the hospitable mansion where so lately I had been an honoured guest! But when at length I rang the bell, and having done so, looked around, how was I startled at the ravages a few short weeks had

wrought! The beautiful exotics, Clara's peculiar care, lay withered and scattered on the steps; the china vases that had contained them, shivered to atoms; the luxuriant creepers, lately so redolent of sweets, lay trailing on the ground, and on the slope of the walk opposite the windows of the apartment I had occupied, rank weeds sprang up amongst the knots of evergreens and flower-baskets. It was not the desolation of winter alone that reigned at the Terrace, but of neglect, of recklessness,—the recklessness which proceeds from the bitter unconsciousness of knowing, that the crushed heart of its possessor no longer expanded to the beautiful pleasures of nature.

"This is unbearable," I said, as none appeared to attend, and obeying the impulse of my impatience, my first soft, low ring was succeeded by a loud one. This answered, the door was thrown open, and a porter in the Eastville livery appeared; making some apology for not having before attended.

"It is of no consequence," I said, trying to speak boldly; "but is Lady Eastville at home?"

"Yes, Sir; but as she has been an invalid, she never admits company. Shall I enter your name?" and he opened his book.

"Is she confined to her apartment?" I demanded, no longer able to command my emotion.

"Not so," he answered; "but since the late unpleasant family events, she seldom receives visitors, more especially now as, I believe, she hopes soon to quit the Terrace.

I slipped a guinea into his hand, for his words relieved me of some fearful apprehensions, which for days had hung about my heart, though I dared not attempt to embody them. Turning to him, I said :

"Be so kind as to go yourself and acquaint her Ladyship, that I have come from London on business of the utmost importance."

My money had gained his good will, and he replied :

"Shall I not announce your name, Sir?"

"It is needless," I answered, "unless Lady Eastville refuses to see me."

He bowed, retired, and in less time than I had anticipated returned to say :

"Be pleased, Sir, to enter, and her Ladyship will attend you in a few moments."

I cannot express my pleasure as I followed him; he ushered me into the dining-room, brought in refreshments, stirred up the fire, every now and then casting furtive glances towards me as I paced up and down, to wile away the anxious time. It was a quarter of an hour after he had left ere any one appeared, and positively the profound silence which reigned throughout the house,

and the howling of the blast without, as it rushed through the withered leaves, were perfectly appalling, while everything else helped to increase the nervous weakness to which I was reduced. I was looking out of one of the windows, when I suddenly heard the door open, and then quickly close ; it was, it must be Clara. I sprang forward and stood before—not Clara, but a tall, stately, elderly looking lady. The shock, the disappointment was too great; I staggered back some steps, gazing at her without the power to speak, although I saw she eyed me with extreme attention. She was the first to break silence by saying :

“ You sent to see me on particular business ; may I request to know the name of the person who honours me ? ”

I bowed, but remained speechless.

“ Good Heaven, speak ! ” she cried. “ Has any accident happened to Sir Egbert or his boys, Sir ? You terrify me beyond belief by this mysterious silence.”

“ Let me not alarm you, Madam,” I replied. “ I know of nothing that could make you uneasy ; but there is some mistake. I came here to see Lady Eastville, who is a very old friend of mine ; and I have something to communicate relative to a connexion of hers which I know will be interesting.”

The lady sighed, and then said :

“ You are, I should think, Sir Freville Deerhurst.”

I coloured with confusion.

“ Sit down,” she said in a kind tone, rolling a chair towards me, “ and here, take this,” and she handed me a glass of wine.

I attempted to swallow it, but could not ; and then in a husky voice exclaimed :

“ Now, Madam, it is your turn to alarm me. Is Lady Eastville ill, or does she indeed refuse to see me ?”

“ I am the Dowager Lady Eastville,” she replied mildly, “ Sir Egbert’s aunt-in-law, and in that all this cruel mistake originates.”

“ Is Clara, Sir Egbert’s wife, here ?” I said impatiently, rising as I spoke to ring the bell ; then, aware of my impetuosity, by way of an excuse I continued, “ Sir Roger Deerhurst is dead, and as he was her connexion, and as he has left unbounded wealth, I must see her, for I am his heir.”

Lady Eastville stood up, followed me, looked wistfully in my face, then grasping my wrist, in low, distinct accents said :

“ Young man, great as have been your errors, still I pity you ; for alas ! I know what it is to lose those we love. Clara, Sir Egbert’s wife, is dead.”

She had only whispered this fatal sentence, and

yet it seemed to me as if a voice of thunder had proclaimed it, and as if the whole earth trembled at the sound.

“Sir Egbert’s wife is dead,” I reiterated in hollow accents, “then, Madam, I need not detain you;” and I made an effort to bow, and walked from the room with perfect composure.

I had a sensation as if I should fall flat upon the earth, and I tramped my feet steadily on the ground, and stretched out my arms to uphold myself; and thus I moved forward, unconscious of the storm of sleet and snow that reigned around, unconscious of everything but the fearful words—Clara, Sir Egbert’s wife, is dead—and they seemed borne on the wings of the wind.

I had only reached the avenue when the porter rushed after me with my hat, which I had forgotten. As he spoke I gazed unconsciously on him, and he placed it on my head, offering me an umbrella, which I motioned away. As I passed by I saw him and the children of the lodge point at me, and laugh. I heeded them not, but continued my path, unconscious whither it led. The night was rapidly closing, and the storm increasing. Already had I walked several miles, when my strength totally failed, and I staggered, and reeled like a drunken man. Suddenly, amidst the roaring of the wind, I heard the wheels of a carriage. It approached, it neared me—the breath of the

foaming horses passed over my face. Loud voices called to go out of the way, or I should be rolled over ; but had an earthquake shaken the world to its centre, I had not sense nor a wish to protect myself. The cracking of whips, the exclamations, nay, curses of men increased : then rude hands dragged me—I fell to the earth—I saw the flash of lights—felt my arm held tight, my coat torn off—a warm stream gushed forth, I breathed more freely, grew deadly sick, then all consciousness vanished.

CHAPTER V.

It was very late on the following morning ere I recovered from the effects of a powerful anodyne that had been administered. I felt extremely weak and languid, and there was a strange confusion in my head, but still my recollection of the past day, until I fell on the road, was perfectly vivid—alas! the awful fact of Clara's death could never, under any circumstances, be forgotten. At the time I awoke, I found myself reclining on a couch in the apartment I had formerly occupied in Dr. Jerold's house. My left arm, from which it appeared I had been profusely bled, was supported in a sling. Opposite to me sat Charles Mellish, looking very pale, and with an air of deep dejection very unlike his usually gay, smiling countenance. Addressing him in a tone of profound grief, I exclaimed:

“Oh! Mellish, is not this a sad conclusion of our adventure? To think that Clara, so bright, so beautiful, should be——” I could not finish the sentence, but uttering convulsive groans, continued: “At the very moment I was anticipating

the raptures of our meeting, she was lying in the cold earth. Mellish, you cannot wish me to survive this terrible grief."

"It is indeed awful," he answered, mournfully, "and at present I am almost as unequal as yourself to dwell upon the recollection. Let us then, Freville, converse upon some other subject."

"Impossible," I answered, vehemently; "it, and it alone, engrosses me. In the shock of hearing of the event, I was so bereft of reflexion that I was incapable of making any inquiries as to the particulars—yet I would willingly learn all; nay, do not hesitate to acquaint me. I know Clara, my soul's idol, is gone for ever, and, knowing that, nothing now can either soothe or add to my affliction."

His countenance was almost convulsed with agitation, and it was some time before he answered; then he said:

"Freville, from the inmost recesses of my soul I compassionate you; the unfortunate lady expired more than a fortnight ago: the exact circumstances attending her death you must inquire of Dr. Jerold."

"A fortnight ago," I reiterated, "then probably she did not receive my accursed letter. Oh, God! had she received it at the hour of approaching dissolution, how her pure soul would have shuddered at my guilt! Mellish, think you what can

have become of the hateful scroll? Methinks the knowledge of Sir Egbert's reading it would add bitterness, even to my present regrets."

Mellish, who had quitted his seat, and was standing in the window with his back turned towards me, did not answer, until I again impatiently addressed him; he then replied:

"The letter is now in Dr. Jerold's hands. On that head I was as much, nay, more to blame than yourself. You, at least, had passion as an excuse; but I had no motive, no object, but an inexcusable, profligate levity." Saying these words, he paced up and down the room.

"Was her death sudden," I inquired in a tone of anguish, "or did the anxiety, and sorrow, and mortification to which I exposed her press on her spirits and destroy her? If so I am a murderer—the worst of murderers."

He rested his head on the mantel-piece, and said in low accents: "Freville, add not horror to the hapless lady's loss by this wild talk; her death, I believe, was sudden. Surely it matters not how it occurred; we had far better not dwell on her memory."

"Ay," I cried vehemently, "in small regrets like yours we banish the unpleasant thought; but where the whole soul is engrossed with the feeling, we cling to our despair, and even in her grave the memory of Clara is dearer to me than all this

world contains. Indulge me, then, by enlarging on every circumstance attending her illness: let me not think she died neglected, unhappy. Was her little girl restored to her care? or, perhaps, she lost her, and that preyed on her health?"

"The child still lingers," said Mellish, sadly; "but Jerold thinks she cannot struggle on much longer. Sir Egbert was fixed in his resolve on that subject, and never allowed her to return to the Terrace."

"Monster of cruelty!" I exclaimed, "to separate an amiable mother from her sick child. But I rejoice to say he is justly punished; for by chance I saw him yesterday, and never did I behold such a spectacle of human woe." This was said with the malice of a fiend.

A flush of anger dyed the face of Mellish, before so pale; he looked fiercely, then addressing me in a severe, solemn tone, said: "As your partner in guilt I would sympathize with you; but this injustice on your part must excite the abhorrence of all men. Freville, you and I have been the aggressors, not the truly unfortunate and bereaved Sir Egbert."

"You are right, Mellish," I said, reaching out my hand; "my best friend, excuse me, my mind borders on the verge of madness."

He shook my hand warmly, exclaiming: "No,

Freville, I have proved myself anything but a judicious friend. Far from dissuading you against your illicit and most unhappy attachment, I encouraged you in it by my advice, and became the abettor of your wild project; but terrible has been my punishment, and sincere shall be my penitence." On uttering these words he rushed from the apartment.

Soon after, Doctor Jerold entered. I rose to receive him and express my thanks for his attentions; but he returned my advances with a cold, stately bow. He looked miserably ill: his features were quite pallid and rigid, I sunk back on my seat; he stood with his back to the fire, and thus we both remained for a full half hour without speaking to, or looking at each other. At length he rung the bell, ordered luncheon, and advancing close to me, said: "Mr. Deerhurst, do you find your arm painful?" I answered in the negative. "Will you permit me to feel your wrist?" I reached out my arm. "Ah! this is well," he said, "you are not very feverish, so I think without danger you may leave here to-night." At the instant the footman entered. "Tell Mr. Mellish," he said addressing him, "that his friend is quite able to travel, so by sunset this afternoon, he may have all in preparation for his departure."

Although nothing in the intensity of my grief

could much affect me, still Doctor Jerold's austerity and impatience to get me out of his house offended me, and I said coldly: "I fear I have been a great intruder on your hospitality. I can only regret it, and in apologising, assure you I am still ignorant how I came here."

He answered in a stern tone, "Sir Freville, at the time, I believe, that you possessed little consciousness, so will now explain the circumstance. On your quitting the Terrace yesterday evening, the Dowager Lady Eastville, shocked at your temerity in coming to this neighbourhood, and terrified lest you might encounter Sir Egbert when the most fatal consequences must have been the result, sent off an express to acquaint me and to entreat that I would find you out and prevail on you to quit Yorkshire. Sir Freville, although from my knowledge of your character, few acts of yours, however reckless, could surprise me, still I had not anticipated your visit to the Terrace. It seems, however, you were unacquainted with the sad event which has so deeply afflicted us all." He sighed audibly, and then continued speaking very rapidly, "No sooner did her Ladyship's express reach me, than I set off; but had not proceeded far, when the coachman called out that there was a drunken man on the road, and that he could not stop the horses; happily I possess great presence of mind, and am

accustomed to contingencies, so I sprang out, literally dragged you into a ditch, else in less than a moment you must have been crushed to death."

"Would to heaven that I had!" I exclaimed fervently.

"God did not so will it," was his cold reply. "My horses proceeded rapidly for some time, and I was at a loss to know how to act, when opportunely I saw a chariot-and-four dashing along. I loudly hailed it; it proved to be your friend, Mr. Mellish, returning from his friendly and libertine adventure. On the lamps being lighted, we discovered it was you whose life I had saved. You had received no injury, but as you were much convulsed, I bled you in the arm; and as your appearing at the hotel would awaken great curiosity, I ordered you to be removed here. My housekeeper is the only one of my present domestics who has ever seen you; and as I can depend upon her secrecy, the rumour of your arrival is not likely to spread."

In a subdued voice I said, "Then, Doctor, to much past kindness, I have now to thank you for saving my life, valueless as I hold it."

He answered petulantly, and casting on me a look of ineffable contempt: "Young man, mark me; when at some risk I sprang from my carriage to save a fellow-creature from a frightful

death, I knew not it was you ; had I, my limbs would not have obeyed the impulse of my charity, and you must have perished. But, Sir Freville Deerhurst, mistake me not for your friend, for there lives not the man I more utterly despise, nay, abhor. Circumstances threw you under my protection, and the duties of my profession compelled me to grant you assistance. These obligations are now at an end, and as soon as the darkness of the night favours your escape from observation, you quit this house for ever. May I never again behold you ; but should chance ever throw us together—and chance alone, on my side, ever can—presume not, dare not, to claim me as an acquaintance, or I will proclaim you aloud as a villain—the most persevering of villains !”

“ Come, come, Doctor,” I exclaimed, starting up, “ whatever my acts, you have no right to use such opprobrious words ; and I shall demand and expect, before an hour hence, the satisfaction to which such language entitles me.”

“ None of your bullying looks at me, Sir Freville,” he retorted. “ This fatal letter is your accusation, and my defence for an excess of passion, which under less provocation, I admit, would have been insulting and ungentlemanly.” He pulled from his pocket my letter to Clara ; it was greatly crushed and torn. As he handed it to me

he seemed much affected, and in a subdued voice said, "Here, this is yours; I would not have been its author for ten times the wealth you now possess. In her dying hour, Lady Eastville returned it to you, with her full forgiveness for all the disgrace and misery you had brought on her. But it is for God not me to judge between you."

He was hurrying from the apartment, when I called out :

"Doctor Jerold, are you insensible to my sufferings? Will you not reflect on my uncontrollable passion, and tell me all about my lost Clara?"

"Yours she never was!" he exclaimed passionately. "Others may believe her guilty, but well I know her angel voice never uttered a falsehood. And, Sir Freville, can you so far mock yourself and me, as to uphold passion as an excuse for crime? That, indeed, would level all morality. Suppose riches your passion, are you to break into a man's house and rob him? If cruelty, are you to torture him? Strange perversion, to cast a halo round some of our vices, and yet start with horror at the very idea of practising others not more culpable in the eyes of God, and often less destructive in society."

"I spoke to a man who never loved, and consequently can have no sympathy with me," I answered. "Still, Doctor Jerold, when you re-

solve to refuse satisfaction, you should be careful not to insult; and I must say, it is unmanly and ungenerous to treat me in this manner, when I have no power of escape—moreover, under your own roof.”

“In some respect,” he answered, “you are right. But, Sir Freville, your own words are my excuse; my excessive passion was uncontrollable, and under its influence I rudely insulted you.”

“You do not admit it as such,” I replied sullenly.

“No, and for that reason I regret it has led me to forget the respect due to myself by speaking to you in such language; and as I will not fight, I apologize for the same.” With these words he retired.

Mellish soon after joined me. I acquainted him with Jerold’s rudeness, requesting he would advise me how to act, as I considered I ought to compel him to a duel.

He answered gravely, “Freville, I see through your object. In the anguish of your mind, you would gladly fight, in the desperate hope of being shot.”

I interrupted him, exclaiming with vivacity, “You are right, Mellish; the most painful death were preferable to my irremediable sorrow.”

“It may be so to your present view,” he replied in the same tone; “but it were in vain to

expect Doctor Jerold to act against his fixed principles of right, and his apology has been quite sufficient to satisfy your honour. Besides, calm your mind so far as to reflect that all the friends of Sir Egbert Eastville must of necessity abhor us, and that our business here was, at best, on a wild and libertine adventure. For me, Freville, the awful lesson it has conveyed is so impressed on my mind, that neither time nor circumstances can efface it."

"At least, Mellish, I exclaimed, satisfy me by an account of Lady Eastville's illness and——" again the word *death* died on my lips—I could not utter it.

He wiped his brow, as in a hoarse voice he replied, "I fancy the event was sudden—a premature confinement, it is said; but, Freville, when a person is gone, what matters the exact manner in which the spirit emancipated itself? And to dwell on the last agonies of expiring nature is horrible, and of no avail." He rose, and advancing to the table, took a deep draught of wine.

I cried passionately, "Mellish, to spare your own feelings, so little interested, you will not gratify mine. I repeat, that the slightest incident attending on Clara is dear to me; and awful as would have been the trial, methinks had I attended on her last moments, my grief would have been less absorbing; at least it might find some circum-

stances of tenderness and hope to soothe it. You do not reply," I continued. "Jerold said she gave him my letter, and with it her forgiveness ; consequently, she must have received it. Think you," and starting up, I grasped him by the arm, "the shock of perusing it could have hurried her confinement, and caused her death? If so, you could not, you would not have me survive her."

He shuddered at my vehemence, and in kindly accents said : "Freville, my friend, why raise this horrible idea to add to your natural affliction? As far as I could learn, Lady Eastville's confinement was not the immediate cause of her death." He then stammered out, "But—but my means of acquiring information were few ; circumstances have forced us upon Doctor Jerold's hospitality, but he can scarcely disguise his abhorrence of us both, and has never addressed me since I entered his house, but to represent, in powerful language, the dreadful results that must follow Sir Egbert's discovery of our being here. And in truth, Freville, I am so ashamed of the infamous part I have acted, that I am as solicitous to leave F—— as Jerold can be to get me out of it ; and with my free choice will never again enter Yorkshire."

"Still," I said, "I cannot see why any mystery should be observed on the mournful subject ; why I, Clara's nearest relative, should not be told every circumstance. I shall inquire into this."

“ Good heaven ! Freville,” he cried with increased agitation, “ there is no mystery ; why admit these strange fancies ? Forget you the position you held was as the lover, not relative of Lady Eastville ? Reflect upon all that has occurred, and then, even in the present abstraction of your mind, you must admit that common prudence and delicacy forbid any person communicating with you or me on the subject. However, I am ready to explain how I first learned the sad event ; and then by our past friendship, I entreat of you not to renew the subject. You are aware that I was proceeding to the appointed spot, a hollow, near the stile leading into the back ground of the Terrace. Well, in my impatience after the mad frolic, I was a full hour too early ; this annoyed me, and for the first time I began to reflect on what might be the result if Lady Eastville despised your advances, or Sir Egbert discovered them. To relieve these unpleasant suggestions, and also to drive off the intense cold,—for I was chilled from travelling all night,—I resolved to walk forward, ordering the chariot to move slowly, and giving my worthy assistants advice, what answers to make should any inquiries be made. I had not proceeded far, when I was met by Mr. Collet, better known by the name of Old Dick Collet. He had frequently dined at our mess, and being as jolly a huntsman as ever rode,

was a great favourite. He immediately recognized me ; we got into conversation, and—and—and, in short, Freville, he told me that Lady Eastville had been dead upwards of a fortnight ! It matters not what I felt at the information ; your own regret was scarcely less vivid. As soon as I could disengage myself from Dick Collet, I returned to the chariot. Solicitous to be the first to acquaint, or rather to break to you the sad truth, I ordered the men to drive to F——, thinking we might meet on the road ; but unacquainted with the way, they took a circuit. Enough, you know the rest.”

Before I could answer, Doctor Jerold entered. He was evidently much excited. Addressing us, he said :

“ Gentlemen, circumstances have led to my saving Sir Freville Deerhurst’s life, and treating you both with hospitality ; in return, I have a request to make, one which none but ruffians could refuse.”

“ Speak, Doctor Jerold,” Mellish replied ; “ and I answer for myself, you shall be obeyed.”

He actually clasped his hands and groaned as he called out, “ It is that you both quit this neighbourhood, this country, without further delay. Not half-an-hour since, Sir Egbert Eastville rode past this house, on his way to the Terrace. Should he there, Sir Freville, learn—and who can depend on servants ?—of your visit, lost as he is, the

whole truth of what brought you here must flash on his mind. Add not then to this terrible affliction by a meeting with him. And oh ! Almighty God, in thy mercy, increase not the wretchedness of that miserable man !”

Mellish would have replied by the kindest assurances ; but Jerold, who appeared quite distracted, called out :

“ Away ! away ! your departure is the only guarantee for your future good conduct.”

So saying, he led us down stairs, and in his impatience, acted the footman, forcing open the chariot door. We entered ; he bade no adieu, and in a few moments the four spanking bays, of which Mellish had so gaily boasted, and which in my mad vanity I expected would have borne Clara to my arms, rapidly conveyed us from the scene of my guilty and fatal passion.

CHAPTER VI.

ANY attempt to describe my unspeakable affliction for Clara must prove fruitless. Those who, by death, have been torn from their best beloved, can too well comprehend its extent; and to the more fortunate or less sensitive, its expression would appear as the exaggeration of fancy or of overwrought sensibility; besides, mine was not a common bereavement, for independent of the criminal passion with which her superior loveliness had inspired me, Clara was linked to my heart—to my memory, by all the associations of infancy, of boyhood, of departed friends. Thus when I lost her, earth seemed desolate of all enjoyment, and, however contradictory my subsequent conduct may appear, and however the scenes which I have to relate may seem a mockery of the sincerity of my love and grief, still they never knew diminution.

On quitting Doctor Jerold's, Mellish and I proceeded to London. Arrived there, trembling

for my health, he called in Abernethy, who, perhaps from caprice had taken a fancy to me, and treated me with the greatest kindness. At first he ordered me to the country, and I removed to an elegant residence on the banks of the Thames, about nine miles from Richmond; but there I could not stay: the spring was just opening, and every bird, every flower, nay, the starry heavens and the verdure of the fields,—in short all connected with nature and nature's God, brought Clara in full force to my mind, and like one demented I fled back to town and there I rushed into dissipation—into vice; but though even frenzy could not associate the idea of her with such scenes, they failed to excite or amuse me. But it is absurd to follow up the aberrations of my despair.

After a few months I became more calm: one good sprung from the intensity of my suffering. I struggled to banish all thoughts of Clara, consequently shunned every object, every subject, connected with her memory; in this I was aided by Abernethy's advice, as well as medical assistance. Mellish, too, although his once gay spirits were quite gone, strove to cheer me, and for this purpose more than once entreated that I would see my former companion, Thomas La Franck, who was then in London, highly esteemed as a divine, and very solicitous to soothe my affliction

by religious hope. But I, somewhat haughtily, spurned the very idea, for unfortunately spiritual consolation was connected in my mind with the vulgar canting of Lieutenant Dolly, who, weak and uneducated, had become a writer of penny tracts, and a chanter of canticles, the latter requiring the inspirations of Bacchus. The sanctified manner in which this presumptuous lot, rated against every other vice, while he nightly indulged in the degrading one of intoxication, thus striving to

Compound for sins, he was inclin'd to,
By damning those he had no mind to,

afforded constant amusement to the mess, and unhappily the contempt which should have been solely confined to the individual, in our unreflecting folly cast a shade of ridicule on the sacred subject, so profanely treated; thus I actually turned with scorn from the thoughts of La Franck and prayer.

While I was thus solely engrossed by my own individual sorrow, Europe was still suffering from all the ravages and horrors of the Peninsular war. Abernethy took advantage of this to press on me the effeminate selfishness, nay, cowardice of remaining tranquilly at home, pining after an irremediable loss, while thousands of my compatriots were fighting for their country's glory. On this

subject Mellish, who was almost in despair at his corps having been ordered to country quarters in Scotland, was still more eloquent, till roused by their representations, and my own ardent wish after some excitement powerful enough to win me from my thoughts of Clara, which in spite of all my efforts to elude them, pursued me like a phantom; I resolved to take some measures to be sent to Spain. It is needless to say that with my command of money, promotion was easily obtained; with it and Mr. Moneymore's assistance, who was quite conversant with all manner of business, and was then the most obsequious slave to my wealth, I was soon gazetted for a troop in the — Hussars, and at the same time Mellish to another in the — Dragoons. From the period of Sir Roger's death, I had purposed purchasing his promotion, and advancing his fortune. He received this compliment from me with expressions of heartfelt gratitude, and with that noble generosity of character, which did not shrink from accepting a favour from a man whom he then esteemed, and on whom, had our fortunes been reversed, he would so willingly have conferred the same kindness.

Shortly after obtaining his troop, Mellish joined his corps, then in Ciudad Rodrigo, where Lord Wellington was assembling his forces; and under the command of that experienced General proceeded to Salamanca, from whence, having driven the French, they crossed the Douro; but it is not

my intention to follow the army's route. From Valladolid, Mellish wrote to me, enthusiastically describing the stirring events of the campaign, and dwelling on the benefit his spirits had derived from constant employment and excitement. After this, at the memorable battle of Vittoria, he so distinguished himself as to obtain the notice and approbation of his Commander, the accounts of which reached me through the public papers, as he was far too modest to boast, even to me, of his success.

These accounts so flattering to Mellish, and the pride which I experienced at England's triumphs, roused me from the hopeless despondency into which I was so rapidly sinking; and although the leave of absence granted on account of my delicate health, wanted some three weeks of being expired, I resolved to set off immediately and join my corps which was then lying before Taragona, under the command of Lord William Bentinck.

It were at once tedious and uninteresting to enter into any detail of a war, with every circumstance of which, and their consequent results, all Europe are intimately acquainted. So passing over the unsuccessful attack upon Taragona, our retreat to Alicant, and subsequent movements, during all of which, from my military knowledge and experience, I had the good fortune to gain the approbation and confidence of Lord William

Bentinck, I shall at once come to Toulouse, at whose desperate and most sanguinary battle, the hero Wellington added another wreath to his former victories, exalting England above all European nations.

It is needless to add that the capture of Toulouse closed the campaign ; it took place on the tenth of April, and on the eleventh intelligence reached that Bonaparte was dethroned. The important news was immediately communicated to the French Generals ; but Soult, on our authority, disdaining to credit the, to him, terrible fact, at his command, the French refused to lay down their arms. This to me proved unfortunate. I had escaped unhurt from the bloody field of Toulouse ; but that evening, being engaged in a *sortie* made by the enemy, I received a severe sabre wound in my right shoulder, which, though in itself not dangerous, became serious from the loss of blood, so to escape being taken prisoner I rode back to my quarters at a furious rate. Fortunately Mellish was there before me, and to his unremitting attentions I owed my perfect recovery.

Next day the French army received indisputable accounts of the abdication of Bonaparte ; a suspension of hostilities was agreed upon, and however disappointed and discomfited, they were obliged to lay down their arms. For myself, my wound was more than compensated for by this proud triumph

to England, and by the manly and flattering kindness shown by Lord Wellington, who honoured me by his personal inquiries. Let me here remark that, owing to his recommendation, on my return to England I received the Order of the Bath.

Although my weakness continued, I was enabled to proceed by short stages to Paris, where the allies were congregated. Mellish preceded me by some days, and at my request, hired a château for my reception, for I did not feel equal to the bustle of public hotels. The one which he selected for its retirement was situated outside the Champs Elysées, at the side remotest from the city. It was of a moderate size, stood in the centre of a small court, which opened on an avenue planted on either side with chesnut trees; this led into the Champs Elysées, and by its shade rendered the place still more gloomy. There were two reception rooms: their windows reaching to the ground, opened on the court; but this offered no advantage, for it was neglected and overgrown with weeds. The servants' department was separated by a long passage from the main building, rendering attendance slow and inconvenient. Aware of these disadvantages, Mellish apologised for his selection of the château, observing that, from the great concourse of people who had flocked into Paris to witness the regal entry of the Count d'Artois, it was almost impossible to get a residence. I assured him, with truth,

that its profound seclusion and quiet rendered it more acceptable to me than the finest palace.

I was accompanied to Paris by my valet, Llewellyn. He was a Welchman from the neighbourhood of Cader Idris, and had been in constant employment about the Parsonage ; had become attached to me, and enlisted into the — light infantry, for the express purpose of being my attendant. On my going to the West Indies, he of course remained with the regiment ; but on my return to England I purchased his discharge, and hired him as valet, till provoked by his folly in boasting, at the Terrace, of my early friendship and relationship to Clara, I parted with him in displeasure, though he declared that he had only insinuated it to Nelly Dudgeon, thinking it would exalt me to have it thought that so great a person as Lady Eastville had been attached to me before her marriage with Sir Egbert.

After Sir Roger's death, moved by Llewellyn's penitence, I was once more tempted to take him into my service, and now committed to him the care of my household. In spite of every precaution, I suffered so seriously from my journey, that for ten days I was confined to the château, and my mind, which the excitement of war, for the time being, had weaned from its gloomy reflections, was again rapidly sinking into despondency. Mellish, in his watchful friendship, observed this, and on many an evening quitted the gay and crowded

salons of Paris to try to cheer me. At first, I was grateful for the kindness, and strove to requite it by struggling against my melancholy ; but when, after a few days, he mentioned that Thomas La Franck was in Paris, and in the devout wish of pouring the balm of religious hope into my wounded spirit, was very solicitous to renew our former acquaintance, I became provoked at what I termed a presumptuous interference, and in my haughty irritation grew quite rude and sarcastic, vulgarly terming La Franck a hypocrite, and comparing him, who was a perfect gentleman, to the low-bred, canting Lieutenant Dolly.

I have since wondered at the mildness with which, for a long time, Mellish bore with me, and which could only result from Christian patience and meekness. He said,

“ Freville, if I appear too importunate, it is because I have received the greatest benefit from La Franck’s doctrine. You recollect that when you liberally presented me with my troop, my once volatile spirits were quite subdued ; well, the occupations and triumphs of conquest cheered me, and I was myself again, until after I was quartered in Alicant, when, owing to an adventure and disappointment which even to you I cannot detail, I was almost distracted ;—life became hateful.

“ In this state I continued till the siege of Pampeluna, in which, owing to a series of rather contrary circumstances, I was engaged ; but more of this hereafter. Impelled by a feeling of desperation similar to that I had so strongly condemned in you, Freville, I resolved to seek what in my self-delusion I deemed an honourable death, and for this purpose rushed into the *mélée* of the fight, and received my guerdon in being covered with wounds and honours, and in being promoted. The stirring duties of the siege left little leisure for individual interests ; still, some care was taken to provide for my safety, though no hopes of my recovery were entertained. In this extremity, La Franck, who was in Spain, heard of my danger, and in memory of our boyish friendship, flew to my assistance, and by unremitting care and medical skill, for he has some knowledge of medicine, preserved my life. Nay, more,—in accordance with his divine mission,—he supported me under the heavy sorrow which before appeared insupportable.”

Mellish paused, for with some of my father’s ill-placed wit, I ridiculed his lately-awakened godliness, and with a profane sarcasm, by the repetition of which I would not now blot my paper, turned him and La Franck into the greatest ridicule ; haughtily adding, that if he only broke in on my solitude to sermonize me, I could well

excuse his intrusion. This was beyond endurance ; provoked and offended, still desirous to avoid an open quarrel, he started up, made a cold bow, and abruptly quitted the apartment. Though ashamed of my conduct, I had not magnanimity to follow and offer some excuse, but stood at the window, and, as he rode by, did not deign to return his salute.

But this vapouring insolence could not deceive myself. I felt that I had acted in a most inexcusable manner to one whose friendship I highly valued, and who, being in his own conduct incapable of rudeness, was slow to excuse it in others ; but I had acquired the habit of banishing all reflection. So, in the present instance, ordering my chariot, I drove to one of the theatres, and afterwards attended a ball at the Louvre ; for there were few entertainments of consequence in Paris to which I was not invited, and received with flattering attention.

CHAPTER VII.

A WEEK had passed on after I held this conversation with Mellish, and though he continued in Paris, he never came to the château. This annoyed me beyond expression; for though my table was crowded with invitations from persons of the highest rank, I was literally without a companion. The fact was, my absent and retiring manners being imputed to pride and *hauteur*, every advance I made towards intimacy was coolly received; yet, on this point, at least, I was treated with injustice, for I set no value on my possessions, so fruitless of enjoyment. My health, however, rapidly improved; and as I was ordered to be constantly in the air, I spent hours either riding or sauntering about, but nothing interested me. In vain Paris presented scenes of the most brilliant gaiety, or deepest political interest; princes, statesmen, heroes passed before me, in all the pride of their distinctive qualities, and various nations, without even ex-

citing my observation, such was the state of apathy into which I had sunk.

At this period, my wealth, by supplying all my wishes, and removing the necessity of exertion, proved a misfortune. One of the resources of my *ennui* was to throw myself into a hammock I got slung in my room, and swing myself like a child, while I smoked cigars ; then I would spring out of it, curse my own indolence, fidget about, take up a book, cast it aside, and stroll out to walk on the Boulevards. There I occasionally saw Mellish and La Franck ; once or twice they approached, as if to address me ; but I turned scornfully into another direction. My selfishness and indolence were rapidly destroying all my nobler qualities : as to my temper, it had become peevish and discontented ; and far from having magnanimity to conquer such faults, or at least, contend against them, I loved to impute my misfortunes and errors to others.—Sir Egbert Eastville was a pompous, jealous tyrant ; Doctor Jerold a cold, philosophic man, incapable of powerful feelings in his own nature, and making no allowance for their influence over others ; Mellish was volatile and weak, good-natured and amiable, indeed, until he was spoiled by religion ; and La Franck—no doubt a hypocrite. Such was the false reasoning by which I at once excused and nourished my growing misanthropy,

whose germ was disappointed passion and vanity.

One evening I returned more gloomy and desponding than ever, from my stroll on the Boulevards; some public rejoicings had been going forward, and every person, but myself, had appeared cheerful and happy; yet I did not envy them, on the contrary, I despised those who could be so easily amused. It chanced that the air was very sultry, and as the irritation of my mind kept me in a constant fever, I threw aside my cravat, unbuttoned my shirt collar, and threw myself into a large chair before the casement, which opened into the narrow, solitary court. There was a profound silence, the servants had gone to witness the rejoicings; a sense of loneliness pressed on me; and, spite of my effort to suppress them, memories of the past stole over my soul, bringing the saddest of all convictions—that those I had most loved—and sadder still, those who had most loved me—were mouldering in their graves, and I was a solitary man, in whom none felt an interest. It may be deemed unmanly, but it is not less true,—I wept with a woman's weakness. From mere exhaustion I fell into a sleep, and then Clara, who, waking, I dare not venture to think on, haunted my imagination. At first, my dreams were troubled; but then the perfume of flowers floated over me, and me-

thought I sat beside her and her father, at the Parsonage, and while she sorted flowers for a garland, I placed others in a basket that Mr. Arnheim held.

I half opened my eyes, and beheld a form in white kneeling before me, and a half-suppressed sigh broke on my ear; then the form rose and leant over me, till I was perfectly conscious that some living, human being was hanging over me, and with seeming tenderness. I suppressed my breath, I did not move; it was a delirium, but one of such exquisite rapture, that I would have prolonged it, even for a few minutes, by the sacrifice of half my wealth. There was a rustling noise, but I still remained in my listless posture, and with my eyelids half closed. I know not how long I had continued in this way, when Llewellyn entered with lights, exclaiming—

“Sir Freville, are you not afraid to sit exposed to the cold, and the dews falling so heavy? and nothing is so unwholesome as the night air.”

I started up angrily, at being disturbed; on my doing so, something fell to the ground; stooping to raise it, I found a bouquet of rare flowers, tied up with blue ribbons.

“Ha! Llewellyn,” I cried, “how came this here?”

He professed his ignorance; had only just returned.

“It is very strange,” I said, “could any person have thrown them in by the casement?”

“By no means,” he answered, “for as I entered, I observed them carefully placed in your bosom, within the folds of your shirt, and supposed you had brought them from the Boulevards, where, Sir Freville, I saw you walking this evening. Had I been aware of your return, of course I should not have presumed to stay out so late.”

“I cannot account for these flowers,” I said, mournfully, and replacing them in my bosom.

“It was some noble lady, no doubt,” he answered, “for as I approached here, I saw one wrapped in a mantilla, in the Spanish style, enter a carriage, which waited at a short distance from this, beyond the grove of chesnuts.”

Dismissing Llewellyn, I again drew forth the flowers, and examined them attentively. There were some fine carnations, white, blotched with scarlet—such had been the most admired and prized by Clara: then the blue ribbon, with which the bouquet was tied, had been her favourite colour—indeed, the only one I had ever seen her wear. My heart palpitated, as I made these observations, and fancies, so strange and wild, that they must have originated in a disturbed imagination, flitted before me. But why attempt to trace thought to its source?—while my heart

admitted the improbable, but rapturous belief, that Clara still lived, far from repulsing the idea, I persuaded myself that the report of her death had been fabricated to check my presumptuous love.

“Yes,” I exclaimed, “when Doctor Jerold received my letter—by whatever chance it fell into his hands—provoked at my perseverance, and, perhaps, fearing that I might yet succeed with Clara, he, no doubt, abetted by the Dowager Lady Eastville, and, perhaps, by dear Clara herself, planned this horrible scheme of deception to banish me from her. Else, why his anxiety to hurry me from the neighbourhood of the Terrace? Were my beloved one no more, what mattered it how long I remained?—I could neither molest or seduce her. Then, Mellish’s eternal teasing to get me from England, and stimulate me to join the war, under the guise of friendship—to act such a perfidious part!—well might he lose his once cheerful spirits, and grow dejected; but he has found a salve for all his treachery in religion,” and I gave a bitter laugh.

Having thus satisfied myself that Clara still lived, with equal sophistry I accounted for her visit to me on the preceding evening; for I no longer doubted her identity. By supposing that Sir Egbert was dead, and that she, hearing of my gallantry at Toulouse, my wounds, and my hav-

ing accompanied the Allies to Paris—for the daily papers were replete with the intelligence—had flown on the wings of love; but from the delicacy and reserve of her character, had chosen that nocturnal and mysterious way of visiting me. It was a flattering romance, perfectly consonant to my vain and imaginative despotism.

Next morning I wrote to Mellish, saying I had something of importance to communicate, and requesting that he would call upon me as soon as possible. The answer was, that he had left Paris for some days. Resolved on obliging him to acknowledge that Clara lived—a fact I no longer doubted,—I sprang on my horse, with the intention of following him; but on arriving at the hotel where he had apartments, I found they were ignorant of his route, or when he was likely to return. This postponement to my wishes, was a severe disappointment.

In the evening, I strolled to the Boulevards, staring at every woman of a noble figure, more particularly if she was veiled; but no one like Clara met my view. Then I returned home, and, spite of Llewellyn's remonstrances on the danger, remained near the lattice till morning; but no mysterious stranger entered. However, I was completely roused from my apathetic indifference, and wandered about like a troubled spirit, sometimes riding to the Champs-Élysées, sometimes

hovering about the Louvre, or Père-la-Chaise, in short, every place strangers were likely to visit. Thus ten days passed on, my health suffered from the cold and restlessness of my nights, all spent before the open lattice ; and with profound melancholy, I began to think that the fair form which had visited me was, spite of the flowers, but an illusion of my fancy.

“ This night,” I exclaimed, as I flung myself in the *fauteuil*, “ is the last I shall devote to this hopeless watch !” indeed, so cold and hopeless, that, to satisfy Llewellyn, I rolled myself in a furred mantle, and soon sunk into a restless slumber.

It must have lasted some hours, for the lamps in my apartment burned dimly, and the pale grey tints of early morning already were appearing, as I was awakened by hearing a deep sigh, and a soft delicious breath passed over my face, and a voice so low as to be scarcely distinct, muttered, “ Dear Freville.”

Angels of mercy ! that one moment of uncontrollable joy seemed a rich recompense for all of past sorrow. Its excess nearly destroyed me. Clara hung over me in all the tenderness of a fond woman’s love, and yet I was faint, powerless. Again lips rested on my forehead ; again, “ Dear Freville,” was murmured forth, and the form was moving off. This roused my energies ; I uttered

a cry, and casting my arms about it, with convulsive eagerness exclaimed :

“Clara, my ever-loved, my never-to-be forgotten, blessings, eternal blessings be poured on you for this kindness.” There was a struggle to escape from my embrace, then a low hysteric laugh, then the head fell languidly on my bosom, and I felt warm tears gush over it.

Without loosening my hold I sunk on one knee, in a hoarse voice exclaiming : “Angel of light, of love ! Idol of my soul’s devotion ! weep not thus, but speak to me. Oh ! in this hour of our ecstatic meeting, when from the cold precincts of the grave you are restored to my hopes, to a love which can never know diminution, let all past sorrows be forgotten. Oh ! Clara, could you but comprehend with what a depth of suffering I heard of your death, you could then appreciate my present rapture ; and if I survived the horrible report, it was because some doubts had been instilled into my mind that you did not return my passion. Then, idol of my soul, speak one word still further to reassure—to bless me !”

Again there was an effort to escape, and I distinctly heard a convulsive sigh ; after a time a gentle, sad voice, said : “Alas ! Freville, by that single word I must destroy the illusion of your happiness. I am not the Clara so passionately loved,—so sincerely regretted.”

Not when I heard the awful words, Clara, Sir Egbert's wife, is dead, did a sense of more bitter sorrow or disappointment overwhelm my soul. A sensation of madness shot through my brain; with a hideous yell I cast off the gentle being who rested on my bosom, and with the fury of a demoniac dashed myself on the ground, striking my head with my clenched hands.

"Oh! Freville, in pity sake," cried Aigline—for it was that beautiful, unfortunate being—as she knelt before me, "calm these frightful passions. Oh! that my folly had not led me here to agonize you, and so deeply mortify myself. Have mercy, Freville, and for my sake, who ran every risk to visit you, conquer this emotion. By what strange deception you concluded I was Clara, I know not." She rose, and folding her arms across her bosom, in a proud, desponding tone, added: "Hearing that she was dead, I thought Aigline Tennant might be remembered. Freville, we have been both deceived, but the delusion is fled. Farewell, we shall meet no more." So saying she sprang through the lattice, and disappeared.

When Llewellyn entered my apartment he found me lying on the ground, and for some days I was so ill as to alarm the poor fellow, who was sincerely attached to me. I was still confined to the house when Mellish arrived. On finding me

so altered and depressed, the coolness with which he had latterly treated me fled, and his manners were affectionate and attentive to a degree. He pressed me to have medical advice.

I answered: "Mellish, before I comply with any request of yours, I must explain that I have a strong suspicion there has been some deception practised on me relative to Lady Eastville's death. From the beginning I perceived some mystery was observed on the subject, but till latterly no doubts arose in my mind. Let me now solemnly entreat of you to acknowledge the truth. If you have been led to deceive me, I grant you forgiveness, and, by a present confession, you for ever command my friendship, which, living or dying, I shall fully prove."

He stared at me with surprise, then concluding I was delirious, strove to sooth me, and pressed me to lie down. I convinced him that I was perfectly sane; he looked troubled, and begged I would explain what had led to such a strange supposition.

Of course my answers were ambiguous; but to satisfy me he raised his sword to his lips, and solemnly swore to the truth of Lady Eastville's death, saying: "There can be no doubt. Jerold pointed out to me her solitary grave in Saint Mary's Church-yard, in whose church I first saw the hapless lady."

For some time I conversed on the subject, though Mellish strove to change it, by pressing me to see a physician and La Franck. I declined both; but this time did so politely, and we parted without any allusion to Aigline. Aware how much he had loved her, I was loathe to wound his feelings by a description of her visit.

All hopes of Clara again crushed, as my health returned my thoughts dwelt on Aigline, on her beauty, and impassioned tenderness, and bitterly I regretted the repulse my disappointed fancy had given to her. Once more I watched at the lattice, but she came not; and as I had no clue of discovering where she was, except through Mellish, who seemed to know every person in Paris, I resolved to question him on the subject, consequently wrote to request he would spend the evening with me. He kindly came, and seemed pleased at finding me in better spirits.

As we sat over our wine I said, carelessly: "By the by, Mellish, I could have sworn that I saw Aigline Tennant the other evening; is this another of my wild fancies, or is she in Paris?"

He grew very pale, then flushed, and in an agitated voice said: "Freville, let us not speak of her. You enjoyed my confidence, and knew she was my first, indeed, only love. It is a weakness, nay, a crime, to retain any tender-

ness for a woman so lost to every better feeling ; still I cannot wholly conquer it."

"All this is very fine, Mellish," I replied, playfully, "but no answer to my question. I wish to know, is Aigline in Paris?"

"It matters not where she is," he replied petulantly. "Freville Deerhurst, do not suppose I care for the wanton ; I must be a fool to do so. But when I think of George Tennant, her noble-minded brother, and the disgrace she has cast on him, and on her father's memory, and of her poor mother's anxious tenderness, by heaven ! it drives me almost to madness ;" and he paced up and down the room.

I saw how much he suffered, and for a moment hesitated to press him on ; but selfishness conquered. So I actually teased him till he resumed his seat, and gave me the following account :

"Freville, when you received Mc Misserton's letter in Chatham, we both concluded that Aigline was living with him in the islands. It was not so. On her father's death, collecting the little property he had left, she retired to some humble spot in the neighbourhood of London, resolving never again to return to Glenlow Castle. Of her subsequent conduct for some time I do not exactly know the particulars ; but I have reason to suppose that she formed a criminal and unfortunate attachment, and with one worthy of her best

affections. Be that as it may, while in Alicant, having one night gone out to meet some friends, by a strange chance I met Aigline. It is needless to dwell on my raptures at again meeting her, though they were soon checked by finding that she was placed under circumstances of the most abject sorrow, poverty, and disgrace. Fortunately, as I thought, it was in my power to render her some services. Oh, God ! how willingly I granted them. Again thrown into her fascinating society, my boyish passion revived. I felt my danger, and fled the temptation ; for, even had old Mc Miserton been dead, and I possessed of the means to marry, I could not unite my fate to one, however lovely, who had brought disgrace on herself ; and I judged rightly, for her subsequent conduct proved her lost to every better, every holier feeling." As he spoke he pressed his hand against his forehead, evidently struggling with powerful emotions.

"Most virtuous youth," I remarked, sarcastically, "was La Franck your Mentor on the occasion ; and did this Circe try to detain you ?"

He turned fiercely on me as he answered : "Sir Freville, on that occasion I required no Mentor. I must have been a villain, the worst of villains, could I have still further degraded George Tennant's sister ; methinks it is impossible that either you or I can ever forget the happy days we spent at Glanmire. Alas ! that I should have

lived to see Tennant's beautiful daughter an object for the cold finger of scorn to point at."

"You were always fond of theatricals, Mellish," I replied sneeringly; "but for heaven's sake forget your Irish habit of never giving a direct answer to a question, and say is Aigline at present in Paris?"

"Yes, Freville, and you will be shocked to hear, under the protection of Lord Beletrieve."

"Then, Mellish, you need not have been quite so scrupulous; perhaps, had you remained near her, and acted a brother's, as you would not a lover's part, she might have escaped the additional disgrace of living with the gallant and most persevering peer. For to my certain knowledge, she always hated and loathed him, or at least professed to do so, for I admit it is not easy to penetrate a woman's thoughts."

He answered somewhat sternly: "Freville, I could not have believed that you would listen to poor Aigline's misfortunes and guilt with such composure, or exercise your sarcasm against her: still in some respect your observation is just. I should not have fled to guard myself from temptation, yet in some degree I had no choice, for I was ordered to Bidassoa, and from thence to Pampeluna."

"You mistake me, Mellish," I replied with vivacity, "I sincerely regret Aigline's fate. Poor girl, her oft-told prophecy, that Lord Beletrieve

would prove her ruin has, it seems, come to pass ; but you appeared so triste, I wished to cheer you ; and now let me remark, as you found her in poverty, may not distress have pressed her on to the horrible necessity of taking this untoward step, and of doing what we so much lament. Believe me, there must be something that meets not our view in the business ; for though volatile, Aigline was proud and fastidious to a degree ; then she was sensitive and romantic, and except from some imperative necessity would never have consented to such an ignominious measure ; nay, would scarcely have consented to become his wife. In short, the more I reflect on her conduct, the more unaccountable it appears.”

“Except,” said Mellish in a choking voice, “that she positively held the same position with another, and according to the old saying, ‘Once a woman makes a slip, she goes rolling down—’”

“‘Till she goes to the devil,’” I interrupted with a forced laugh.

Again he turned furiously on me, as he exclaimed : “Sir Freville, how came you and I ever to be friends ? I hope not from any reciprocity of character.” I made no reply, and he continued more vehemently, “Unfortunately I am under pecuniary obligations to you ;—it is a bitter reflection.”

Ashamed of having provoked him by a levity merely assumed to disguise the deep interest I took in Aigline, I rose, and taking his unwilling hand, said with vivacity: "My dear Mellish, I have no hesitation in asking your pardon, for anything I may have said to offend. I am aware that my manner latterly is caustic and disagreeable, but to you never intentionally. So say you forgive me."

"Most readily," he replied with a burst of honest feeling. Thus I pledge you," he cried; filling out a bumper of claret, he poured out one for me; and after a time I renewed our subject, by again observing:

"May not Aigline, as I have said, been compelled by distress to live with Lord Beletrieve."

"I wish I could plead that excuse for her," he answered; "but I never let her want. Amidst all her faults, she retained in her character, her father's noble generosity; consequently to reconcile her to accept of my gifts, I never let her suspect my want of money; besides at the period I was fully supplied."

"Let me inquire, Mellish, how you came to be so flush of cash?" I interrupted.

"Freville, that question from you is absurd. When first I met Aigline I had not a guinea; but I drew in advance on my paymaster, besides which he lent me some hundreds. It was a weakness,

but I could not endure to see her suffer any privation, above all, when I recollected her father's liberal hospitality to me and my mother, and by this means I soon got so involved, that but for the large sum you forwarded me to Alicant, I had been compelled to dispose of my troop; spite of the disgrace of quitting the army in the very midst of the war, the idea was so torturing, that I could not have survived it."

"Mellish, to what money do you allude? I never forwarded you one shilling, although had I been aware of your embarrassment I should have done so without hesitation, and thought Sir Roger's rupees were never more honourably disposed of."

"On some points," he answered, "you, Freville, possess more refinement of feeling than any man I ever met; but mysterious as was the manner in which you forwarded your anonymous letter and gift, not for a moment did I doubt from whom they came; and now, Freville, let me hope that you will add to the obligations you have already heaped on me, by never again alluding to Aigline. I would, if possible, forget the existence of one whose shame has cast a shadow over my happiness; also, Deerhurst, bear in mind, that between gentlemen the one who confers a pecuniary favour on the other, should be very guarded of giving offence. For the pre-

sent, I must bid you adieu, as I have some military duties to attend."

He rung for his horse; I accompanied him to the outer gate, and as he mounted, said: "Melish, we must have a talk over this money business, I solemnly assure you it was not I who sent it." He smiled incredulously, shook his head, and springing on his charger galloped off. While resolved on seeking an immediate interview with Aigline, I hurried into Paris to gain further information.

I entered a *café* much frequented by the military; seating myself by a table, I ordered refreshments and began to converse with some officers; they cheerfully met my advances. Among other things we spoke of music, and as the conviviality increased, to win on their confidence, I sang some of my best songs: they were loudly applauded and encored. This, as I expected, threw off all reserve; after a time with affected indifference I observed, that I understood the most beautiful woman in Paris, was residing with Lord Beletrieve. Then, indeed, there was no lack of talk, of scandal, and of foolery; changed as were my principles, a shudder passed over my soul, as I heard Aigline associated with gross and vulgar names. However, my object was gained; I ascertained that Lord Beletrieve resided with her in the immediate neighbourhood of the Louvre. It

appeared he had long known Louis XVIII, and was on intimate terms with him. My informant, Colonel Weston, who seemed to be intimately acquainted with Lord Beletrieve's character spoke of him and his Cosmopolite principles with contempt; and in a humorous manner mentioned, that spite of the affected indifference, which an obedience prescribed by the rules of the order to which he had so many years belonged, enforced upon him, he was in reality not the callous scoundrel he pretended to be. The Colonel told me, that of all his passions—and his passions, strange to say, by those who were best acquainted with him, were known to be strong—his jealousy was understood to be the strongest. This elucidation of a character, hitherto deemed inscrutable, I confess, surprised me. I acknowledged as much; but the Colonel smiled at my inexperience.

“In short, Sir Freville,” he concluded, “crowded as is Paris, Lord Beletrieve and the lady have become objects of general curiosity.”

I was inclined to doubt this account of Lord Beletrieve's jealousy, so unlike his usual cold, contemptuous bearing; but when I recollected how well he knew what Aigline had been, nay, was—how infinitely beyond his former conception of her value, I began to think it less surprising. Resolving to pursue my inquiries, I said: “Colonel Weston, may I ask does this fair frailty

revenge herself for his tyranny by encouraging other lovers?"

He replied, "On the contrary, I understand she is as modest and retiring as if she were his wife; certainly there is no accounting for the caprices of a woman's fancy, when one so beautiful and accomplished as this young lady is reported to be, can solely devote herself to him."

I smiled, and after some more conversation quitted the *café*, resolved to reconnoitre the place where Aigline resided "in durance vile" with this very polite and paltry miscreant. Rapidly passing the Louvre, I soon discovered the Beletrieve Hotel: it was a large mansion facing the street. For some time, I continued pacing up and down before it, staring into the windows in the vain hope of Aigline's appearing at them; far from it, his Lordship who chanced to be within, observed my manner, at once recognised me, and no doubt penetrating my purpose, instantly hurried out, and advancing towards me with his usual courtesy, and more animation than I had ever seen him display, took my hand, exclaiming: "Mr. Deerhurst, this is a most agreeable surprise; but I forget it is no longer the gay young ensign I address, but the wealthy baronet—a major too, (I had been gazetted for my majority). Now amidst so many acquisitions, what am I to call you?"

Not a little confounded at his having seen me, and at the sneering expression of his countenance, which so ill accorded with his playful words, I hesitated what to say ; but after a moment recovering myself, I replied : “ In the pleasure of seeing your Lordship and renewing our acquaintance, I care not by what title I am addressed.”

“ Well said, my young gallant,” he cried in a sarcastic tone : “ I guessed, when you observed my hotel so closely you wished to enter, no doubt to renew old acquaintance. However, Sir Freville, my present domicile is a shabby concern, and as my pride has survived my wealth, I never invite any one into it.” He gave his sickly forced smile ; but spite of his cosmopolite philosophy a sigh burst forth, and for some moments, still moving onward in the direction of the palace of the Louvre, he remained silent.

I followed, slowly marking the alterations in his appearance since we had last met ; his figure was greatly attenuated, his lameness quite confirmed, and to the usual wan and sneering expression of his countenance, was now added a profound sadness ; in fact, the very concentration of selfishness which had indurated his heart to the disappointments and woes of others, made him feel his own fallen state more sensibly. With the Prince’s favour, the fabric of fashion on which he had founded his fantastic pretensions vanished, and

one by one his whole set deserted from him, while the *danseuse-de-corde* for whom, under the influence of some undefinable sentiment, he had sacrificed so much, impatient of the restraints under which he placed her, fled back to her former companions.

After walking for some time, Lord Beletrieve, pointing to a seat, said :—

“ Shall we rest here ? ”

I obeyed ; he viewed me with attention, and, then in a graceful manner, but again sighing, added :—

“ Where, Sir Freville Deerhurst, shall I begin my congratulations on the torrent of good fortune which encompasses you ? You have succeeded to Sir Roger’s wealth and title ; then you are already celebrated for your prowess in battle. I assure you but yesterday at a military re-union I heard Lord Wellington make honourable mention of your name.”

I blushed scarlet with pleasure at such a compliment. Not noticing, he proceeded :—

“ Now, though my taste never consisted in warfare, I can well imagine its excitement, consequently pleasure. May I inquire whether, amidst these elevations, you have had leisure to renew your flirtation with the Miss Vilmonts ? Which is to be the chosen one, or (he playfully added) do you adhere to your former intent of intro-

ducing a Bill into Parliament to prove the propriety and moral advantages likely to arise from your marrying the three sisters: another circumstance upon which I could hardly congratulate you. Consequently, I shall not envy you; indeed, I much doubt whether success there will be rewarded, even by transient pleasure," and he gave his sickly smile, and inimitable shrug.

I tried to answer in a playful manner, observing, "I must not claim the original suggestion of the Bill; it was Miss . . ." ere I could add, "Tennant; —he resolved to avoid her name, and in his abrupt manner said:—

"All this time, Sir Freville, you have never made one inquiry relative to myself; not even to ask why, in defiance of my general system, I have rushed into Paris with its myriads of sight-hunters. Verily, you soldiers, in the dire work of vengeance and death, neglect the *politesse* of society."

Though I saw through his *ruse*, I had no alternative. Being aware that he would play off every attempt I made to touch on any subject of which he did not approve, I answered: — "Your Lordship must excuse my apparent neglect, and oblige me by saying what was your inducement to follow the many?"

He replied with mock solemnity:—

"What came I here for to see? Lo! a King clad in regal vestments."

“True, my Lord,” I answered ; “ I understand you and Louis XVIII. are great friends.”

“ Friends,” he scornfully reiterated ; “ bah ! but, Sir Freville, you are a youth, the hero of two battles, and no doubt of half-a-dozen love adventures, consequently, entitled to romance ; but the idea of Louis XVIII. of France and Lord Beletrieve being friends, is a stride beyond the romantic, and reaches to the burlesque.”

I stammered out : “ I heard, that when he was in England, you had conferred some favours on him.”

“ No such thing ; but, even if I had, the proud, though persecuted descendant of the Bourbons, would have received them as a right ; and, as to a Frenchman loving one of our nation, it would be outraging nature ; and credit me, Sir Freville, when we are obliged, by some imperative necessity, to receive favours from those we consider our inferiors, in the mortification of our self-love we seldom feel gratitude.”

“ You must not expect me, Lord Beletrieve,” I coolly answered, “ to adopt your views on this subject. It would speak little for human nature.”

“ Of which, in your self-devotion, you wish to think well. So be it. You, Sir Freville, are in your zenith, I in my decline, consequently view objects in a different light ; and, as to your adopting my opinions, it would not answer ; for, rapidly

as I am fading away, I am likely to survive the fashion of my thoughts. Nay, gentle youth, look not so surprised at the expression, for, in every age, under every form of government, or prayer, fashion is the presiding genius, before whose capricious will we all prostrate;" he gave his scornful shrug as he added, "acknowledge, Sir Freville, is it not the only excuse for the fantastic follies of which, with all our boasted intellect, we are guilty?"

There was a something in the countenance and manner of Lord Beletrieve when he indulged in his caustic misanthropy, which always chilled and depressed me. To change the subject I now again demanded what had brought him to Paris.

He answered:—"The most extraordinary event that ever occurred; and, though no soothsayer, I predict that ever will occur. Bonaparte, the hero of a hundred battles, is dethroned, and Louis XVIII., with a crown on his head, fills his throne, and is guarded by the Allies' triple-edged sword. It is passing strange; therefore, came I to witness it."

"All as it should be," I replied, with vivacity. "The usurper is banished, and the hereditary heir fills the throne, from which his noble and ancient race were only driven by rebellion and violence."

"Well said, my gay and gallant soldier; but, mark me, when you enter the *cafés*, keep these

Anglicised sentiments to yourself. Remember, the French hate us. I, for one, should despise them, if they did not. And now, Sir Freville, a word, ere we part. I ask not what brought you to Paris, for I guess your reply, and penetrate your motive; forsooth, even to attend to your wound you could not refrain from coming to witness England's triumph—bah! so much for your answer; and for your object, it is a useless pursuit. Now I bid you good evening. It is pleasant when people perfectly understand each other: they are not likely to seek intimacies which might lead to mistakes, quarrels, and all manner of disagreement. So, farewell, Sir Freville."

He rose from his seat, casting on me a look of unutterable hatred. I politely bade him good evening, and then walked off, without—even independent of Aigline—the slightest wish to renew our acquaintance; for, through the ambiguity of his manner, I perceived, that, like many men of desperate fortunes, he, so long the companion and flatterer of princes, had turned revolutionist;—also, that, in spite of his high bearing, he was jealous of the good fortune which, since our first meeting, had raised me above his patronage; and, if any thing was necessary to increase my anxious wish to see Aigline, it was the desire of still further mortifying him. Certainly, at that period in lieu of my long-engrossing love for Clara, I ad-

mitted the influence of the most contemptible impulses.

Concluding that Lord Beletrieve would keep a sharp look out, I resolved not again to approach his hotel, lest he might take some measures to remove Aigline from Paris. I well knew, from her high spirit and determination, that, if she chose to offer opposition, he would find her unmanageable ; on the other hand, his suspicions roused, there was no time to be lost, so, after revolving a hundred different plans in my mind, I determined on confiding a letter for Aigline to Llewellyn, and, as he was a shrewd faithful fellow, and much attached to my interest, hoped he would find an opportunity of having it delivered. Accordingly I summoned him, and, without alluding to past events, merely said that I had discovered that the fair incognita who had brought me the flowers was residing at Lord Beletrieve's hotel, that she and I had been old friends, and that I was solicitous to have a letter privately conveyed to her. But his Lordship being very jealous in his temper, guarded her so closely, I found it would be next to impossible. I then represented the necessity of observing a profound secrecy on the subject.

Llewellyn listened most attentively, and appeared delighted at the thought of being included in the adventure. With a knowing leer, he assured

me that it was not the first time he had been an active agent in an adventure. I started, but my fastidiousness was out of place; for, encouraged by my confidence, he related to me several anecdotes, proving his own expertness as a Mercury. He concluded by saying that gold was a key to every door, and that by a happy chance he knew Lord Beletrieve's valet, who loved a glass, consequently could be easily won over to our interest.

It was then agreed that my name should not appear in the business; and, in the event of Llewellyn's negotiations being discovered, to elude all suspicion, he was to retire to a lodging in Paris, and affect to have quitted my service. Such were the mean subterfuges and alliances to which, in the pursuit of a criminal object, my proud spirit descended.

It is unnecessary to enter into a detail of all the petty scheming of Llewellyn to win over Lord Beletrieve's valet; and, when he at length succeeded in having my letters conveyed to Aigline, his boasting and egotism were so intolerable, that I regretted having ever employed him, more especially as she returned my letter under cover, merely writing these few words :

“Freville, painfully convinced of your indifference, I lay no stress on professions written under

the influence of regret for the unmanly violence with which you received me. Aware of my own degradation, I grant forgiveness; but all future acquaintance between us is at an end. Persist not, then, in your addresses, which only increase my mortification. Should you write again, ungracious as it may appear, I shall return your letters unopened. Freville, farewell.

“AIGLINE.”

This opposition and indifference on her side, gave a fresh impetus to my feelings. Again and again I wrote, but my letters were returned unopened. Still worse, Llewellyn learned that Lord Beletrieve was about returning to England, and arrangements for his departure were already in preparation. What was to be done? I offered hundreds to Llewellyn if he succeeded in gaining me an interview with her; he took a hundred guineas, saying they were sufficient. It is quite surprising to what a state of excitement I had wrought up my feelings; positively, for two days I was in such a fever of anxiety that I could neither eat nor sleep. The third evening since Llewellyn had taken the money came, and he had not appeared: I was uneasy. Had he betrayed me, and embezzled the hundred guineas?—They were of no consequence, but the deception was terrible. I strode through the little patch of pleasure-ground attached to the château, then into

the narrow court ; for I feared to quit the place, lest he might return. At length, in despair, I resolved once more to visit the *café*, and seek for information. Just as I was setting off, Llewellyn arrived, and in joyous accents exclaimed,

“ Well, master, though I have kept you waiting, this time I am not without my errand. Lord Beletrieve has just gone to the Louvre, to take leave of some of the foreign princes, who set off from Paris to-morrow. His Lordship was so proud of the invitation to sup with the fine folk, he could not resist accepting of it, though for the last week he has been on the watch, as he has some suspicion of foul play ; and his valet says, his temper is so jealous, that when his shadow hits across the lady it makes him uneasy. Only think, master, of a man being jealous of his shadow, a part of himself ; is it not droll ? ”

“ Stop this nonsense,” I cried angrily, “ and say, have I any chance of seeing the lady ? ”

“ Chance, master ! why it is a certainty. For what else did you give your hundred guineas ? Nothing like money for expediting business ; so, having a plenty, I hired a carriage, and, if it is your pleasure, you have only just to jump into it, and whisk off to the Beletrieve Hotel.”

“ What then ? ” I demanded.

With a knowing grin, he said,

“ Why, your honour, you will of course be shown up to the saloon where the lady sits.”

“Is the lady apprised of my intention?” I said.

“Not a word of it,” he answered. “Surely, Sir Freville, as you were old friends, it will be only an agreeable surprise to her to see you. And then the valet says, she and his Lordship fight like cat and dog, and she perfectly hates him.”

Again a pang shot through my heart at hearing Aigline thus spoken of; but it checked me not, so wrapping myself up in a coachman’s great coat and slouched hat, accompanied by Llewellyn, I drove within view of Lord Beletrieve’s. Having alighted, and ordering the carriage to wait, I stepped boldly up to the front door, where a person, who I concluded was the obsequious valet, waited to receive me. I slipped a well-filled purse into his hand: he made quite a reverential bow, and without speaking led me up a fine staircase, down a long corridor, and pointing to a half opened door, through which a gleam of light streamed, said in French, that bespoke him a Parisian:

“The lady is there; if she is to escape with you, you must be quick, his Lordship seldom keeps late hours. At all events, Monsieur, within three hours at the utmost, you must depart from this.”

I promised, dismissed him, and the next moment found myself alone with Aigline.

As, except to the parties concerned, love scenes appear absurd and uninteresting I shall not enter into a description of mine with Aigline. At first she received me angrily, haughtily, accusing me of rudeness and ingratitude, and reproaching me for want of tenderness; ultimately she listened to my solemn protestation, that from the period I lost Clara, she had been the dearest object of my affections. Then came an acknowledgment of her joy when she learned I was in Paris, her anxiety to see me—her fears and doubts of her reception—the opportunities she found of paying her nocturnal visits to me, and her disappointment at awakening my despair, instead of my regard.

To all this I poured forth soft and flattering words, dwelling on the happiness we had enjoyed together in London. I then mentioned my interview with Lord Beletrieve, and belief that he had become a revolutionist. This led to a long conversation respecting him, and she solemnly assured me, that circumstances of the most painful nature, but such as she could not explain, had alone compelled her to reside under his roof; and that the very necessity had increased her abhorrence, which was augmented by the annoyances to which she was daily exposed. This acknowledgment of her sentiments and unhappiness afforded an opportunity to press my suit. Let me do the unfortunate Aigline justice; though persuaded, she was

so agitated, that she fainted away ; at the instant, the valet tapped at the door ; I opened it and requested he would bring some essences. She soon revived, and offering no further opposition, we supported her between us to the carriage. Thus I conveyed to my house the daughter of him who, in extremity, had proved my best friend : and who, in the confidence of a noble nature, had obtained my solemn promise to guard over her honour with a brother's tenderness and care.

How Lord Beletrieve bore her loss I could not ascertain ; as a few days after, while, no doubt, planning to be revenged, he was obliged to abscond from Paris, in consequence of some money transaction, with the particulars of which I also remained ignorant. These facts Llewellyn learned at his hotel, where I sent him to demand Aigline's luggage, as, far from wishing to deceive his Lordship, I rather gloried in having outwitted him. It also appeared that he had dismissed his valet, and broke up his establishment ; having no intention, he said, of again returning to France. Some reported that he was going to St. Petersburg, but the general belief was, that he had only retired to some part of England ; however, it was my opinion that he would proceed to Russia.

CHAPTER VIII.

IT was a strange combination of events which had connected Aigline and me together. On either side, there was little genuine love, and no expectation of happiness. She had sought me from the memory of past tenderness, and a wish to escape from the tyranny of Lord Beletrieve; and I had wooed her as a relief from an *ennui* so absorbing, that it was actually paralyzing my being. Thus the strongest links of sympathy existing between us, were a reckless indifference to all moral principles, an ardent desire to please each other, and under the assumption of a false gaiety, a strenuous endeavour to disguise the devouring grief which preyed on our hearts. Daily I laid before her all the offerings which love could devise, or wealth purchase. She received them gratefully, praised my selection, ornamented herself with the brilliant gems, and gracefully arranged in her apartments the various toys; and to reward me, touched the harp with a syren's skill, accom-

panying it with a voice of perfect harmony. But all was seeming show ; in truth, she was exquisitely miserable.

Proud of this beautiful creature, I wished to collect an admiring crowd about her ; but with all my recklessness, while Mellish continued in Paris, I dreaded to do so. The words he had used during our last interview, when speaking of Aigline, still pressed on my memory : “ I must have been a villain, the worst of villains,” he said, “ could I have still further degraded George Tennant’s sister.” With less temptation, I had acted that part, and I shrank from the withering contempt with which, when it came to his knowledge, he would treat me. Not that I any longer valued his friendship ; on the contrary, humbled by an innate consciousness of my own inferiority in every nobler quality, I hated, because I could not despise him.

Week after week rolled on. Aigline and I being left solely to ourselves, as the novelty of our first meeting passed away, became less guarded and assiduous in our manners, till by imperceptible degrees, all reserve wore off, and our natural feelings shone forth. At times she was gay to levity : dancing, singing, reciting, and amusing me by a variety of talent and anecdote ; then she would sink into the most gloomy despondency ; and when I chid her for depressing me by her melancholy,

she would struggle to regain her cheerfulness, and as I discovered, have recourse to laudanum. Sincerely attached to her, this grieved me beyond measure ; still I hesitated to betray my knowledge of the destructive habit. At length, in expectation of persuading her against it, I expressed my disapprobation, explaining the ruinous results to which the indulgence must inevitably lead. She received my advice petulantly, accusing me of acting over her as a spy ; then, seeing my brow flush with anger, she tried in a playful, witty manner, to uphold the practice ; and when I reasoned against it, taking my hand, in piteous accents she said :

“ Oh ! Freville, could you but comprehend the excess of my agony when thoughts of the past, the present, or the future press on my brain, you would not wonder at my adopting any means to suppress them, even for an instant.”

Perhaps in my over-zeal I treated her too harshly on this head ; for, as I afterwards found, she began to fear me. Experiencing the liveliest curiosity to learn the particulars of her union and subsequent adventures, more particularly the circumstances attending her meeting with Mellish in Alicant, I constantly introduced the subject, but she always evaded every reference to her life subsequent to her father's death. However, she had no hesitation in speaking of Mc Misserton, and one evening, being particularly cheerful, she gave me the following account of her nuptials, saying :

“ I always call it the comic scene, or rather farce of my life ; it was a most ridiculous business. Freville, you already know that we left London in consequence of my dear father’s involvements ; well, even his generous nature could not resist the indurating effects of gambling. The romance and poetry of his mind were fled, and he incessantly represented to me the absolute necessity of establishing myself by a wealthy marriage.

While half starving in the bonny land of cakes, we became acquainted with General Mc Misserton, then in his seventy-third year ; and he, good man, was so charmed by my style of singing old Scotch ditties, and my knowledge of his country’s chivalry, that at the end of three weeks he proposed for me to my father, and I accepted the proposal.”

“ Good heaven ! Aigline,” I cried, “ how could you, young, beautiful, and accomplished, so sacrifice yourself ?”

“ What could I do ?” she replied hastily. “ My character was injured by the false reports of that wretch, Beletrieve ;—I was an embarrassment to my unfortunate father ; more influential than either, I had made the notable discovery, that unaccompanied by wealth or station, beauty or talent were of no avail ; fashion, indeed, was a substitute for their intrinsic advantages ; but alas ! its vain glory had departed from me.” I smiled at

her sarcasm, and she continued: "Why did I marry the Mc Misserton? because even for a moment I never reflected on the ties or duties of the holy state into which I was entering. In my scheme of pleasure I certainly considered the old man a sad incumbrance, but one easily set aside. As he himself eloquently expressed it, he was a stout old Highlander, who loved the sports of the field as well as ever; and who, after visiting many a sunny and fertile clime, had, like Frankland's Greenlander, returned to give a preference to the cold and barren hills of his native land. Then he was eternally lauding his sister, Miss Rachel, a steady, sandy-haired spinster, who for forty years had ruled over his establishment with such watchful economy, that she had increased his inheritance of four thousand a year to five. I could well believe the wide extent of country over which he lorded, when he possessed such an income in the north of Sutherland.

"Having learned these particulars, I mentally arranged everything to my satisfaction. The General, spite of his folly in marrying me, appeared a sensible person; and, no doubt, as the novelty of his position wore off, ashamed of having chosen so youthful a bride, would be anxious to leave Edinburgh, where our ill-assorted nuptials had taken place, and return to his castle; and then Miss Rachel should have my full consent to

continue her control over the barefooted and snooded damsels and kilted youths, who, I understood, formed the household; for the Mc Misserton boasted that, as far as possible, he retained the habits of his chivalrous ancestors. Good heaven! how an acquaintance with them destroyed all the illusions and grandeur my imagination had cast over the memories of by-gone days!

“If the General and Miss Rachel retained former habits, why not I? So I concluded on re-purchasing my father’s elegant residence—fortunately then for sale—hiring a box at the Opera, and spending the season in London, and my summer on the continent. On Christmas plans I could not well decide till I saw how far Glenlow Castle was prepared for company. One thing was in its favour—it was surrounded by a fine sporting country, and there was good fishing. As to the minor considerations of equipages, furniture, *bijouterie*, they were all to be in the best style—elegant, without pomp or show. I prided myself that a naturally good taste had been improved by observation: and, though I hated the man, I also knew that the Mc Misserton had an abundance of ready money; so there was nothing to interfere with my wishes. It was a bright phantom to veil a dark reality! Yet, though full of a weak vanity, there was no sin in my thoughts. On the contrary, I resolved to be grave in my manner, and

correct to prudence in my conduct; and it was my intention to press my father to reside with me during the General's absence, for I neither expected or wished him to remain in London.

“You laugh, Freville, at my so totally setting him aside: to say truth, I must have been either mad or a fool to have so mistaken my man; and yet it was not so extraordinary as in the repetition it appears, for, from the day our union was fixed, I constantly spoke of my intentions, of course qualifying them so as not to offend his self-love; and, though he never assented, he never objected, but would extend his dry, hard lips into a grin, that displayed his long yellow teeth, for all the world like a horse's; or pass off some joke on how the young gallants would admire the gaber-lunzie's bonny wife. Then he would pat my cheeks, play with my ringlets, calling me his healsome giglet, his couchat, his daft lambie, and a thousand other pet names; while I, in the furtherance of my vain plans submitted to his dotage. Oh! Freville, though it ill becomes one so lost to preach either morality or religion, yet I have no hesitation in saying, that the woman, who from necessity or interested motives, kneels at the altar of her God, vowing to love a man she utterly abhors, not only outrages the laws of nature, of modesty, of truth, but makes a fearful stride towards future crime. And

as I trace in my own sad soul the rapid progress to guilt, I impute it more to my burlesque nuptials, than even to the maxims of Lord Beletrieve."

"Dear Aigline," I said, for she actually quivered with emotion, "waive these self-accusations. I am desirous to hear how you managed in the Highlands, for I know you went there."

"Besides, Freville," and she forced a smile, "you hate prosy and trite observations, and in this degenerate age, when the generality of unions are founded on interest or convenience, all I can say on the subject must be common-place. So, to return to the McMisserton. When we were about six weeks married he told me to prepare to accompany him in a couple of days to Glenlow Castle, where Miss Rachel expected us: 'Indeed,' he added, 'I had not so long continued in this flaunting town, only she wished to have the way made ready before you.'

"This announcement fretted me: not that I had any idea of consenting, but it brought matters to a decision. So, wishing to carry my point amicably, I said that it was my intention to accompany my father to London, and to arrange for our going there early in the spring: it was then October.

"He stared at me with unaffected astonishment; then in his hateful, broad Scottish accent drawled out, 'Heck, what a daft hizzie to think of

disputing your husband's commands. My giglet, is that the way you hope to go flaunting? I shall soon bring you to your tackling; and, as to your father, it is little of him you shall see in future, for he is almost as great a fool as yourself.' This speech irritated me, and, giving way to my anger, I represented how cruel and unjust it would be in him to suppose a person of my age could consent to be buried alive in the Highlands.

"Without being in the least discomposed, he answered:—'You should have reflected on all this before marriage. If I was satisfied to barter the dignity of my ancient family, by uniting myself to the daughter of a man who followed a craft, you might well exchange the advantages of youth—a gift you have in common with the humblest—for the honour of having your name grafted on the genealogical tree of the McMissertons of Sutherland.'

"At another period I must have laughed at his solemn consequence; but then, terrified at the idea of being obliged to accompany him, I contended the point, saying that, though my father had been compelled by circumstances to follow business, he was just as well descended.

"'Admit it,' said he, gravely; 'still, in a chivalrous race it is a blemish on their escutcheon, seeing that the name and connexion are men-

tioned without the cause which led to the degradation being specified, so the whys and wherefores of a man's following business, are lost to posterity, as I shall explain to you.'

" 'By no means, General,' I answered, angrily; 'it were a loss of time, I assure you. I am perfectly aware of the antiquity of the McMissertons.'

" 'Knowing it, you shall learn to respect me,' was the answer.

" I replied saucily enough, 'It was not to respect, but to love you, I vowed; and, if you would not have me falsify my oath, you will not deprive me of all the recreations my youth delights in. It would oblige me to consider you as a jailer, not friend, tempting me to break my vow: so, reflect dear Mac,' I added, coaxingly 'ere you refuse my reasonable request of spending a few months of every year in London, and then I shall cheerfully devote the remainder to you.'

" This observation threw him into a violent passion. In his harsh voice, and as usual intermingling his words with Scotch phrases, he exclaimed:

" 'Hoity, toity, you jade! the deil take your impudence, to think to deceive me with your Irish phraise. I spent two years in that same Ireland, long enough to understand their daffin ways; and so you want some recreations in

London to reconcile you to your gaberlunzie, some dainty Jo to be jaukin with you ; while I, forsooth, stay at home like a cuif, sending you my tocher to waste upon whirligigums. You are but a silly vap-rin-gipsy after all your gab, or you would consider my experience. I entered the army at the boyish age of eighteen, a fine, tall, strapping, comely youth as ever left the Highlands, gallant withal, and full of winsome ways to please the lassies ; and many a bonnie lass whose name has long been forgotten in the grave, and many a bright eye now dimmed with age, loved to see the McMisserton, aye, and more too, no need of a wife then to care for me. Let me see, it was in the summer of 1755 that I entered the army, and proceeded to Ireland, and soon after sailed from Cork with General Braddock for Virginia. Well, well, I see you titter at this tale of auld lang syne, and if I were to tell you I fought in the field with a Wolfe and a Washington, and a thousand other heroes, it would be all the same, you would rather listen to some clai-vering billies wheedlings.' He paused, expecting to be contradicted ; but I made some pert remark, and he continued more passionately : ' Ay, and I fought in Germany, and gallantly too ; and for miles round the hills of Sutherland blazed with bonfires, and loudly the pibroch and bagpipe proclaimed the McMisserton's triumph ; and then

I visited your boasted country, rebellious Ireland. Now take all these circumstances into just consideration, and lay aside the foolish hope, that by the clatter of your tongue you can conquer a man who undaunted, braved the cannon's thunder ; it's enough to raize me, to hear a hizzie like you, who had not a plack for her tocher, thinking to manage me as if I was a mere bluntie.'

"At another time, I should have been amused at witnessing his fury ; positively his scant grey hair bristled like a hedgehog's, and his glassy eyes, of a pewter colour, actually glared on me like a tiger's ; then—to render his compound language more emphatic—every time he uttered a Scotch word, he struck the ground with a large gold-headed cane. In short, nothing could be more ludicrous to a looker-on ; but alas ! as the chief actor in the scene, I felt that to me it was likely to prove a tragedy. There was no mistaking his sternness of purpose, and I actually burst into tears as, no longer deceived by my vain fancies, I beheld in its true light the position to which in my unreflecting levity, I had doomed myself. Far from yielding gracefully to what I knew was inevitable, I still contended the point, representing that, as he was old enough to be my grandfather, he should reflect that our tastes must widely differ.

"Having recovered his composure he answered

calmly: 'There is no justice in you, or you would not speak after that manner of what was your own free act; moreover, when you express such daft thoughts I must keep a sharp look out; you seem to think I married you just to amuse the idle gallants of the town; however, when you go to Glenlow Castle, sister Rachel shall teach you your duty; and believe me, none ever approaches its gates without my knowledge. Woe to them that dare! And now I must leave you, for I would rather stand before the cannon's mouth than see a woman greetin, even though it is an ungrateful hizzie like yourself.'

"With these words, he marched off, while I flew to my father to entreat his interference. He listened to me with his usual tenderness, representing how impotent all my efforts to dispute the McMisserton's authority must prove, and trying to reconcile me to my fate, which, to say the truth, was sad enough, by fully explaining his own distress, and his intention, now I was provided for, of proceeding to London and making one more desperate effort to redeem his ruined fortune. This grieved me to the soul, for I sincerely loved him, and wished to dissuade him from the ruinous vice of gambling, but durst not; for with all his kindness, he had never permitted the least want of respect; so with a regret that seemed the harbinger of future sorrow, we

parted, and a few days after, the General and I set off for Sutherland."

"And Aigline," I demanded, "was the ancestral residence of the McMisserton in reality a castle? I remember when the idea of visiting the wild glens and heath-covered mountains of Scotland formed one of the dreams of your youthful fancies."

"Yes, Freville," she replied, "but not as the bride of a man of seventy-three; and what I found more intolerable, was the companionship of that venerable and peevish spinster, Miss Rachel. Then as to the residence, it had nothing to entitle it to the romantic name of a castle, except the ivy-mantled ruins of an old donjon, which stood exactly opposite to the house, a square, shabby, ill-finished, half-furnished dwelling, fitter habitation for a farmer than a chieftain. The surrounding country, indeed, was fine, nay, magnificent in its scenery; but even nature receives a tint from our feelings, and certainly while in Scotland there was no *couleur de rose* in mine."

"How Miss Rachel and her attendant nymphs must have admired you! Certes, Aigline, you must have appeared as the goddess of beauty amidst the brawny Highland race."

She laughed gaily, as she observed: "Oh, Freville! how little you comprehend their tastes and prejudices. In the first instance, ideas of

beauty are, I believe, in most families, formed from some recollection or feeling :—the admired of our parents or the beloved of our hearts becomes a standard. Consequently, in the opinion of Miss Rachel, who I believe had never travelled ten miles from Glenlow, comeliness, as she termed it, consisted in a strong-made, bony form, blue eyes and yellow or sandy hair ; and grace, in a striding walk, and in bounding and plunging through a reel or hornpipe.”

“Then, Aiglié,” I said, “you had no chance of eliciting her admiration. How came the General to select you?”

“Oh ! his taste was perverted from the Gaelic, by having visited so many countries ; then I have already told you, it was my voice, not my person which captivated him ; besides he possessed some good qualities, Miss Rachel none :—her judgment on me, however, is too good not to be told. The day after my arrival at Glenlow, where by the by, I was coolly received—as the Mc Misserton’s clan could not be reconciled to their chief marrying a shipwright’s daughter—I heard her say to her surrounding handmaids, one of whom had ventured to remark that I was very comely—‘The diel take your fletherin tongue that praises her. She is but a feckless lassie, and my poor auld brother was surely doited when he chose her. No doubt the jad used some contraife with him, and

he heezed the hizzie just to jouk her.' All this amused me, for I was malicious enough to enjoy Miss Rachel's mortification. Now, Freville, judge from this observation, how far the *distingué* air, which had excited the admiration of the Prince, and elected me a London belle, was valued at Glenlow: not an iota, I can assure you. The whole clan would not have given a mess of porritch for my beauty; still it is quite wonderful how the mind yields to circumstances, and were it not for Miss Rachel's interference, I think I could have got on tolerably. The old General really loved me; then I found amusement in jogging on a pony as rugged as a bear through the mountains and glens, and conversing with the old people, who being very intelligent and full of ancient prejudices,—moreover, replete with wonderful legends, and ballads, and historical facts—were very entertaining, and began to like the gaberlunzie's young wife for taking such an interest in their beloved country, when all was upset by my losing my temper one day that Miss Rachel was more pertinacious than usual, and, somewhat rudely telling her, that as soon as the General died—and he could not, from his advanced age, be expected to live long—I would reside at Glenlow, for the righteous purpose of banishing her from the seat of her forefathers. It is needless to say, that the very idea of being expelled

from her Paradise inspired horror. She flew in tears to make her complaint.

“Such a speech at any time must have mortified the McMisserton, but that morning being troubled with an indigestion, from an over meal of crowdie, seasoned to his particular taste, he was seriously angry, and did not for the day condescend to address me. This I bore with very Christian-like resignation; discovering which, he adopted another method of punishment; for immediately after dinner, Miss Rachel, with the most pompous air possible spread out an immense sheet of half-mildewed musty parchment, which she held open with her bony fingers, while the General clapping his spectacles on his high hooked nose, and leaning his thin gaunt figure over the table, so as to command a bird’s-eye view of the valuable document, with the end of his cane, pointing to several characters, which to me appeared very hieroglyphical, he began muttering some names, when Miss Rachel screamed forth :

“ ‘Speak out boldly, Davoc, and show this craft-man’s daughter from what ancient bluid you sprung.’

“He replied with solemn gravity :

“Rachel, that is not my present object; but I wish to impress on her mind, that, descended from a patriarchal race, with their blood I inherit their longevity, that is, so far as can be expected from

the change revolving ages have made in the atmosphere, the increase of population, and other natural causes too profound for this winsome cuchat to understand.'

"And he patted my cheek, and stroked down my hair, as if I were a child, saying in his softest accents :

" 'Aigline, I am going to prove that we do not measure time as the vulgar herd. Look attentively at this our genealogical tree, and you will observe that the founder of our noble house was Davoc, after whom all the succeeding heirs of the family have been named, aye, to the tenth generation. Now, this Davoc was but a tiller of the ground,—for, remember, all greatness must have a beginning :—however, being a sprightly lad, he amused his evenings learning the use of the claymore, and, besides, was an excellent bowman; in short, even while his hands guided the plough, his heart was with the wars ; so, when the celebrated insurrection of Mary broke out, off he posts to fight as a volunteer in the royal cause :—heroic was the deed, and lucky was the conquest—hand to hand he fought with the rebel chief Donald Mc William, wrenched the claymore from his powerful arm, and laid it at the feet of Alexander II., the son and successor of William, the lion of Scotland, and for this deed of loyalty and prowess in arms, Alexander endowed him and his

heirs with this fief of Glenlow. And thus the gadsman became a feudal laird. Now this event took place in the year of our Lord 1215. Next to him was . . . ?

“Springing from the table, I called out petulantly: ‘Good Heaven! can you suppose me mad, to listen to the history of the McMissertons for six hundred years; believe me, I am content with my present knowledge of them.’

“‘I told you,’ again screamed out Miss Rachel, ‘that she was an unco-gilpey.’

“‘Silence, woman,’ exclaimed the General, turning angrily on her. ‘And you, Aigline, return, and I shall merely speak of my immediate grandfathers; bear in mind, your own sons—and I hope you will have many—’

“‘Will love to hear of their heroic deeds,’ I returned, with a saucy laugh: not noticing it, he said:

“‘As a hand holding a claymore is our crest, spite of your impatience I shall remark, in reference to it, that, in 1445, another of my ancestors, a lineal descendant of Davoc’s was elected to the honour of accompanying to France the embassy, who went there to choose a bride for James II. of Scotland; and the legend goes, that it was owing to the gallantry and the noble bearing of the McMisserton that Mary of Guelderland accepted of the youthful monarch. Be that

as it may, when the nuptials took place at Leith, Davoc presented to his King, as a wedding gift, the claymore wrenched from Donald McWilliam some two hundred years before. It was gracefully accepted, and hung up in Stirling Castle with the most prized of the royal arms.'

"Forgive me," said I, again interrupting him; "but I feel no interest in all this."

"'But your sons will,' said the General, with a sentimental sigh.

"I laughed again, whilst Miss Rachel, who feared to provoke his ire, looked unutterable things. For some moments the McMisserton remained silent; then after an inward struggle against the pleasure he found in conversing over the merits of his ancestors, he exclaimed:

"'Come we at once to the longevity of my great, great, grandfather, celebrated for his adherence to the unfortunate Mary, who lived to the venerable age of one hundred and three years; his grandson, my grandfather, at the age of ninety-seven possessed a strength of mind and body which promised long life. But, unhappily, in celebration of some foreign victory gained by the Sutherland yeomanry, he indulged in a debauch, which threw him into a fever, and carried him off in nine days. My poor father died very young, being but seventy-three. It was, however, the result of an accident, so bespoke no decline in the

powers of our family. Being particularly active, and of a light form, he was fond of boyish recreations, so one day, to amuse his grandson, the young McDuff, he laid his hand on his hunter's main to bound on its back, when the boy, full of tricks, struck the animal on the fetlock; this caused it to rear and plunge; my unfortunate father was dashed to the ground, and by a kick on the temple killed on the spot. Thus he was carried off in the very prime of his life.'

"No longer restraining my indignation, I exclaimed: 'General, can you be serious, to say a man of seventy-three was in the prime of his life? Why it is against scriptural knowledge. I cannot believe it.'

"He exclaimed angrily:

"Then, please God, you shall see it, and seeing you must believe. I am the very image of my great great-grandfather, who lived to be one hundred and three, besides months and days, which your impatient temper would not wait to reckon; then I am hale in my constitution, temperate in my habits, composed in my temper, easy in my circumstances, and above all, breathing the fresh air of my native hills; so, as far as human calculation extends, I may calculate on reaching the same venerable age of which I now want about twenty-seven years; besides the months and days are all of consequence at the end of a man's life,

though little valued at its commencement. Now by that time you will have reached your jubilee year, or thereabouts—a steady age for women; so I shall be more content to leave you guardian over my sons or daughters, that may arise from our union.’

“I waived further contest with the General, which put him into such good humour, that for several days he did nothing but pet me in his uncouth manner; he acting the part of the ass, and I of the lap-dog, in the fable. For to irritate Miss Rachel, I encouraged him in all his fooleries, making him chase me round the tables and garden, play at shuttlecock, dance reels, hunt butterflies, he looking all the while as stiff and grim as a Don Quixote. His kilted Highlanders began to cross themselves, and swore the gaberlunzie was daft; and Miss Rachel, who, like many others, that are themselves absurd, still have a quick observation for the ridiculous in others, would constantly roar out, ‘Davoc, you are more of a coof than a collie, to let that giglet wheedle you into such fashions. I prophecy she will put you on the cutty stool ere long.’”

I interrupted Aigline, saying archly:

“And did the carlin’s—is not that the Scotch for a stout old lady?—spae come to pass? Now, do not look so fatigued from the subject, but tell me how long you sported with the old fool, and

what stay you made in the Highlands, and whether you cheered your solitude by a few more quarrels with Miss Rachel."

She answered: "In all, I lived with the McMisserton a year and nine months, and as to our quarrels they were too numerous to be related; still I cannot give a graphic description of my grievances; they were a sort of Lilliputian torments, very annoying to the sufferer, but which would appear as of no consequence in detail. My greatest crime was not giving an heir to Glenlow Castle: really the lament of the General and Miss Rachel on this head was absurd beyond belief. At one time they would represent the inconvenience and disappointment that must result from my obstinacy. To the Clan of the McMisserton sometimes I was scolded, sometimes petted on the subject; the next heir to Glenlow was in the female line, grandson of the very McDuff whose levity had caused the death of Davoc's father. Add to these tremendous faults, my dislike to parritch, sowans, haggis, crowdie, and all the unpalatable mixtures with which Miss Rachel fed the family. I may as well mention that, in every thing of economy the General sided with his sister; for, by a strange infatuation, while he hated his heir, he could not resist the secret impulse of a miserly disposition to heap up treasures for him.

“A short time before I fled from Glenlow, this McDuff Gower arrived—a most unwelcome guest; but still Highland hospitality would not close the door on kith or kin. He was a great, tall, ungainly youth, with fair hair and bright complexion, and spite of his country’s prejudices, had the good taste to admire me, and to say it too. This lost him all favour in the sight of Miss Rachel, who was always complaining of him, and trying to stir up the General to jealousy. Out of revenge, McDuff would take an opportunity to throw salt or pepper into the crowdie or parritch; then the old man would scold Miss Rachel, she the servants, they the McDuff, who, full of boyish tricks and impudence, would deny it; so the whole house was a scene of confusion, which, to confess a folly, I rather enjoyed.

“In the midst of this nonsense, I received an account that my father was thrown into the debtor’s prison. In a state of agitation I flew to the General, requesting he would accompany me to London and make some effort to release him. He mocked my folly, swearing a tremendous oath, that he would not part a bodle to assist a ninny who had squandered all his substance at the gaming table. It was a terrible truth; but his misfortune only attached me the more closely to my misguided parent, and I even condescended to entreat of Miss Rachel to interest herself in his

favour; but she was a cold-hearted, malicious woman, and actually delighted in my misery. McDuff, witnessing this, being naturally generous and affectionate, and fancying himself in love with me, made such offers to the McMisserton if he would release my father, as his cupidity must have accepted, if the interest the youth showed had not awakened his jealousy: and now the childish bickerings and petty malice which had before reigned in our family, burst forth into the darker passions; and what with the false insinuations of the spinster, Miss Rachel, and the angry words of the General, the clan of the McMissertons imbibed such a hatred against me, that I positively began to think my life was endangered. While meditating how to avoid it, I received a letter, with the painful intelligence that my father was in a fever, and supposed to be at the point of death. All thoughts of self faded before this additional affliction; I knelt at the McMisserton's feet, wildly entreating permission to go and attend on him. Methinks but for his unreasonable jealousy, he would not have rejected my supplications, for he was not deficient in good feeling where his love for gold, the master passion, did not interfere; but then, whatever influenced him, far from sympathising in my natural grief, he treated me harshly—swore that I had some secret motive, or that I would not leave that diel

of a chiel McDuff Gower to go into a prison to tend my foolish father ; and as his anger waxed warmer, he threatened to lock me up. Altogether he so provoked, so disgusted me, that I resolved no longer to submit to his tyranny. Quick at thought, I rapidly arranged a plan of escape ; so rising from my knees, and commanding my emotion, I said : ‘ Enough, McMisserton, I shall never again press you on the subject.’ He seemed pleased at my acquiescence.

“ I soon found an opportunity of speaking to McDuff, and at once confided to him my intention of escaping from Glenlow. Though startled at its boldness, he made no opposition ; his unrequited love rendered him my slave, and he willingly acceded to my plans. Accordingly at dinner he announced that he purposed quitting Sutherland on the following morning. His uncle received the intelligence with unaffected pleasure, Miss Rachel with regret, for she delighted in mischief, the only variety to her monotonous existence, and she feared, once the McDuff was gone, her brother’s jealousy would die away, and she be deprived of the pleasure of tormenting him and injuring me.

“ When retiring for the night, McDuff asked for the keys, saying that he would set off before daybreak ; he did not wish to disturb the family, so would take them to his chamber. This con-

siderate arrangement was received with surprise by Miss Rachel; indeed she might well be astonished, as heretofore McDuff had devoted his whole time to annoying the household, and the keys were handed to him, with many thanks.

“As this stratagem had succeeded, all the rest was easy. In the middle of the night I stole from my couch, and while the McMisserton was in a deep sleep, I slipped on my habit, packed up my jewels, all of which had been my father’s gifts, and gliding down stairs, was soon joined by McDuff, who had my mare, another of my father’s presents, in readiness, and in a few moments I galloped off from my Highland home, whose expected chains of gold had turned into iron.”

“To say truth, Aigline,” I observed, “it was a bold measure, yet I can scarcely blame you; but say, how did the young McDuff behave on the occasion?”

“Gallantly, generously, like a true son of Scotia; for, spite of the McMisserton clan, they are a noble race. I knew his youthful feelings were full of romance, and so, ere we departed from Glenlow, I represented to him that during our journey he should treat me with the most distant respect, as otherwise I could not accept of his protection, explaining, that though fully aware of the scandal likely to result from our eloping together, still, while supported by conscious inno-

cence and the conviction that by flying to my father's assistance I performed a sacred duty, I could treat all false reports with contempt. Alas ! this recklessness of public opinion is to woman the trampling down of one of the strongest barriers to their virtue.

“ We proceeded by a lonely and circuitous route to Edinburgh, travelling slowly for the sake of our steeds. Arrived there, McDuff sold my mare, which was valuable, and then, spite of his entreaties and regret, I bade him adieu, and proceeded by the public vehicles to London, and after some little difficulty, succeeded in gaining admittance into my father's prison. He was still under the influence of fever. By parting with some of my jewels, I was enabled to procure for him the best medical attendance ; and after a few days he recovered from the fearful complaint ; but there was no ministering to a mind so devoured with grief and remorse—for the misery to which his fatal error had doomed me preyed on his heart consuming all the principles of life. He sank into a rapid decline, and in a few short months I followed him to his last sad home—a tragic conclusion, Freville, to my strange marriage with the McMisserton.” She paused, and then in a hurried tone said : “ Shall we take a walk or ride to banish these gloomy thoughts ? ”

“ Yes, dear Aigline,” I replied ; “ but tell me

first;—did you again return to Sutherland, and if not, where did you go?—all concerning you, my best love, must interest me.”

“It is at least kindly said,” she answered with some bitterness; “but methinks, Freville, it were in better taste not to press me into a detail of events, which, from the circumstances under which we met, you must be aware, led to evil. Why,” she passionately continued, “wish me to trace back, step by step, the passions and the consequent misery, which sank me into the lowest state of degradation—a shame and reproach to my own sex, the slave, victim of yours, and worse again, a disgrace and affliction to the few, the very few, who in my present fallen state, are charitable enough to retain any remembrance of what I was, or compassion for what I am?”

“Forgive me, dear Aigline,” I said mildly; “by inquiring whether you had returned to the Highlands, I did not mean to offend.”

“True,” she replied quickly, “you put no other questions; but methought your looks implied more, and oh! Freville, the slightest allusion to the scenes that occurred subsequent to my poor father’s death awakens memories of such woe that my brain seems to wither.” Taking my hand in hers, she said in touching accents—“We have both been unfortunate, our best and dearest lie buried in the grave, the image of their beauty

defaced by death ; should not this terrible unity of itself draw us together by the bonds of sympathy ?”

This speech, uttered in broken sentences, only helped to stimulate my curiosity relative to the past ; still I resolved not to press her on the subject till a more favourable opportunity, so ringing the bell, I ordered our horses to be led out : then with affected carelessness said—“ Cheer up, my best love, I regret having said anything to annoy you ; but, in truth, I never before suspected you of possessing such powerful sensibilities.”

As I uttered these words she turned very pale, sighed convulsively, clasping her hands together, and exclaimed, “ Oh ! how these words agonize me.”

“ And wherefore, Aigline ?” I demanded. She shook her head, then after a visible struggle regaining some composure, exclaimed—“ What need of explanation ; it matters not now who misjudge me ;” then with a loud hysteric laugh she added—“ Besides, to preserve the beauty of harmony, when the actions are full of levity so should the thoughts be. It were a terrible anomaly to see the mind consenting to evil, while the spirit lamented over its corruption ! That indeed, were a foretaste of the hell to which the guilty are doomed.”

So saying, she rushed from the apartment. In about an hour she returned : there was a flush on

her cheek, a tremor in her voice, and a lightness in her eyes, which assured me, that to elevate her spirits, she had had recourse to laudanum. This sincerely grieved me; but not affecting to notice it, I led her to her horse, and though the evening was far advanced, we rode to the Tuileries.

CHAPTER IX.

WHILE Aigline and I thus lived in solitude, Paris presented a scene of political excitement and gaiety, seldom equalled ; indeed, so powerful was the former that, for the time being, individual interests seemed forgotten in the public good, but varying according to the respective feelings of the parties. On one side were to be seen the Royalists, who, while surrounded by kingly state, and foreigners of rank and distinction, still strove by a proud obsequiousness to win over to the Bourbon restoration the people and the soldiery. On the other side were the friends of Bonaparte, who, musing over his renunciation, hating the Bourbons, and dissatisfied with the treaties negotiating with England, scarcely deigned to disguise their discontent, and burning wish for vengeance. But these passions offered no check to pleasure ; the theatres were filled with dramatists and musicians from almost every country in Europe ; all the places of public resort were thrown open ;

while the Court and nobility gave the most magnificent entertainments. To several of these I had been invited, for my reputed gallantry at Toulouse; and being considered one of the wealthiest subjects of England, of no despicable personal appearance, and with a taste for music, it may be certain I was accounted worthy of notice. Nay more, my secluded habits awakened an interest:—by some they were imputed to pride and fastidiousness, by others to a superiority of intellect, which found its pleasures in literature; but in either case, the less I sought to be noticed, the more my company was prized: such is the strange caprice of society in its ardent pursuit after novelty, grasping at objects the most difficult of attainment.

I had been led to accept several of these invitations. The deference with which I was received by those who sought my patronage, and the conversations I heard among some of the most enlightened and polished men of the day, rendered me discontented with my position. I began to reflect that I had not been just to myself; that there were powers of greatness in my mind which only required development; that I was whiling away my time and fortune in frivolous pursuits, and on objects which the most contemptible, possessed of wealth, could obtain. Resolving, henceforth, that ambition should be

my god, I began to form schemes of political advancement, and for this purpose, no longer shunning society, courted the acquaintance of men in power.

As might be expected, this wrought a change in my habits : I was seldom at home, and Aigline was left daily to the solitude of her broken heart. At first, I had formed excuses for my desertion ; but after a time even these ceased ; and once or twice, when she pressed me to stay, I thought her unreasonable. Then she would use all a woman's wiles to attach me, or at least, to make her company necessary. Yet, I do not think this resulted so much from love, as the dread of being again deserted, and perhaps sunk still lower in crime. Poor Aigline ! even while her proud spirit rose in indignation, or sunk in depression, she would sing and play for my amusement ; though, as some airs brought back the memory of the past, I could observe her voice quiver with agony, and tears rush down her face. At these times, all selfish as I was, I would try to soothe her, and sometimes insist on her walking or riding with me.

It so chanced, that some days had elapsed without my meeting Mellish, and as I knew several officers had taken advantage of the suspension of hostilities to go on leave, and as he had men-

tioned that he had some important business to transact in Ireland, I concluded he had gone there, and no longer apprehensive of his meeting Aigline, proposed to her to accompany me to some of the theatres.

She hesitated, blushed, and then, with a sigh, answered :

“Dear Freville, since my disgrace, I have never entered into any society; of course the respectable would not associate with me, and I utterly abhor other society. You sneer, Freville; but it is not the less true. May we not loathe in others, the disease which consumes ourselves ?”

I answered peevishly: “In the present instance, this speech is out of place. I merely wished to gratify you, by taking you to see the new play, and the crowd of foreigners likely to attend its performance. Really, Aigline, you provoke me by your caprice. You are offended when I leave you, and still will never accompany me!—now what am I to do? Would you have us linked together like two goats at the side of a ditch—when one draws forward, the other is sure to pull backwards, and so neither can ever escape the boundary. Rather too much of a good thing, Aigline,” and I gave a forced laugh.

In a subdued voice she said: “Then, Freville, I shall no longer object to accompany you. I

have often wished to conquer my dislike to be seen, for I am aware amusement might sometimes wean my thoughts from self—”

“And certainly,” I interrupted, “it were preferable to the pernicious use of laudanum. But, no more of this ; say, would you prefer the theatre or opera ?”

“The opera, decidedly,” she replied.

“Then,” said I, rising, “if you promise to be cheerful, I will ride into Paris, and make inquiries.”

She assented, and so we parted.

“As I rode slowly forward, I began to reflect, whether my introducing Aigline might not be considered an outrage on morals, by those men whose good opinion, in my newly-formed schemes of ambition, I was desirous to conciliate, and many of whom were even more exalted by talent and noble principles than by their high position, and who, far from countenancing the freedom of manners introduced by revolutionary principles, exerted all their influence to check the widely spreading corruption. Such apprehensions, and no pity for the unfortunate Aigline, whose pride would, by a public display, be immolated to my vanity, made me resolved, ere I introduced her, to go to the *café*, and sound the opinion of some of my military friends on the subject. I was interrupted in my musings by seeing a horseman

galloping forward. I soon discovered it was Mellish: muttering a curse at his being still in Paris, and concluding that he was going to the château, I called loudly to him to stop. At first he did not hear me, and then had some difficulty in drawing up his horse, while I actually trembled with terror, from the idea of his proceeding and seeing Aigline. At length, having succeeded in checking his steed, he came up to me, exclaiming:

“Deerhurst, this is fortunate; I was just on my way to your château.”

I stammered out: “Why, Mellish, it is so long since I have seen you, I had concluded you were gone to Ireland! Was not such your intention?”

He answered: “For the last few days I have been at Verdun on some military business, and did purpose setting off to-morrow on my way to Ireland, where I have business of consequence to transact. But an hour since I received a letter from George Tennant, which, probably, may detain me here for some days longer; it is about this I wish to consult you; and, as we cannot so conveniently converse on horseback, order your groom to lead our horses to the château, and let us walk on.”

“Impossible!” I exclaimed, with more vivacity than the subject seemed to demand, “I am obliged to proceed to Paris.”

“Are you too much hurried to walk there?” he said, mildly. “There is a pleasant pathway to the left, retired and shaded. Deerhurst, do not refuse me, for I am deeply interested in what I have to say.”

Though anticipating some ill, I sprang from my horse. He quickly alighted, and, leading me across a field, we entered a narrow avenue, shaded by rows of acacias.

“This,” said he, “will lead us to Paris, and is not more than half a mile circuit.”

He then put his arm through mine, and we proceeded in silence. After waiting a time, I called out: “Mellish, in the name of Heaven what are you about? You stop me in my ride, force me off my horse, bring me to this retired place, and then drag me forward without uttering a word. Forgive me for saying I rather suspect you have been doing honour to Bacchus.”

He answered sadly:

“Would to God my emotion proceeded from being inebriated—it would soon pass off. Whereas the cause from which I now suffer can never be removed. However, I must not delay you with useless regrets; what I want to speak of is George Tennant’s letter. It is dated from New York, and should have been here upwards of a month ago. It seems that George, who was one of the distinguished few who so gallantly defended An-

holt soon after its conquest, sailed in his frigate for the United States, and, being caught in the storms which proved so fatal to many, after encountering divers dangers, and having an almost miraculous escape, reached New York, where he now waits till his vessel is repaired."

"And what is there in all this," I coldly demanded, "to awaken interest or regret? On the contrary, I think we should rejoice both at George's gallantry and escape."

He answered vehemently:—

"Deerhurst, do you overlook Aigline's shame, and the disgrace it will bring on her gallant brother?"

"This was not our subject," I hastily replied.

"No," he exclaimed; "but my mind actually wanders when I think on her. I tell you, Freville, that wretched, abandoned woman is knit into every fibre of my heart. In vain I struggle to uproot my passion; at the same instant I love, hate, admire, loathe, her; in good or evil she engrosses all my thoughts; but, independent of self, I must be worthless, indeed, to be insensible to the affliction the knowledge of her guilt must convey to George, who is so devotedly attached to her, and whose ideas of female delicacy and honour are almost chivalric. But read his letter, and see how little he is prepared for such a blow."

As he spoke, a pang of agony and shame passed

through my soul ; for no sophistry could render me insensible to the injury I had done my two early companions, Mellish and Tennant. I felt humiliated and miserable ; and, being unable to command my voice, remained silent.

Observing my emotion, he grasped my hand, exclaiming :—

“Deerhurst, this sympathy is worthy of you. Unfortunate in your own love, you can feel for others. Forgive me when I acknowledge that, latterly, spite of all your generous friendship, my regard for you was lessened, for I imputed to you a cold, callous selfishness, more destructive, more hateful, than any act of passion, and regretted being under obligations to one I began to despise. Accept, my dear friend, this apology for the injustice of my thoughts,” and he warmly pressed my hand.

Much annoyed, to change the subject, I said : “I would rather not read George’s letter. Report from it what you wish me to know.”

“It seems,” he replied, “that the poor fellow was ignorant of his father’s death until he reached New York ; there he found letters from his man of business, announcing that he had died in the debtor’s prison, but mentioning no further particulars, except that Miss Tennant had married a very old man, a General McMisserton, of Sutherland, and that it was reported she had

separated from him. George in his letter remarks, 'All this appears to me very strange ; I left my father in opulent circumstances, and cannot imagine how he could have been involved ; and, if so, why he did not apply to me, who by all the ties of duty and affection was bound to assist him, and possessed full means of so doing. Probably his distress proceeded from some bank failure, of which I still remain ignorant ; as, indeed, nothing can be more ambiguous and unsatisfactory than my intelligence. Fortunately my money is placed in the National Bank, so nothing short of a revolution can deprive me of it ; and my father's want of confidence must have proceeded from some doubts of my affection. Now that he is gone, this adds to my affliction for his loss.' He then alludes to Aigline's marriage, and says : 'The idea of a girl so accomplished and high-minded, making such an unequal alliance, appeared to him monstrous ; in short, that some mystery seemed to hang over his family.' And he entreats of me in the most solemn manner, to make every inquiry relative to her, and write all the particulars I can learn without loss of time, as he hopes soon to sail for Europe."

I made no observation, and Mellish proceeded :

"Deerhurst, I now come to that part of George's letter in which you are included. He says : 'It is with infinite pleasure I find from the public

papers that our old schoolfellow, Freville Deerhurst, has come in for his grandfather's property ; and better again, so distinguished himself in the Peninsula. Bear him my warmest congratulations on both subjects. I know they will be acceptable, for he is far too good a fellow to forget in prosperity old friends ; and such is my confidence in him, I have no hesitation in requesting that, with you, he will become trustee to the sum of five thousand pounds—and for which I send a check on my banker—to be disposed of in any manner you both best approve for Aigline's exclusive advantage. It was ever my intention, when I arrived at an age to claim old Julian Ardent's legacy, to present her with that sum ; and, probably, from my poor father's involvements, it may now be very acceptable. My dear Mellish, I shall not offend you or Deerhurst by offering any apology for this trouble ; and am confident you will both, in this business, act towards Aigline with the zeal and tenderness of brothers.' He then enters into a long eulogium on her, and concludes with a hope that, on his return, we may yet spend many happy days together. However, Freville, I think you had best take the letter, and read it at your leisure, for George, in two or three places, speaks of you in the most flattering terms ; and this reminds me of what his father was wont to say : ' How comes it that this wild lad, Deerhurst,

a stranger among us, should be the favourite of us all?' And then Aigline would remark so naturally, 'because he is so much handsomer than the others, and then he plays the key-bugle so exquisitely. Then Mrs. Tennant's grave lecture to the poor girl for the weakness of admiring beauty.'"

A sigh burst from Mellish at these recollections; and, without further observation, he would have handed me the letter, but I rudely pushed it back, exclaiming:—"No, no; where is the necessity? you have told me its contents."

Too much agitated to notice the strangeness of my manner, he said:—

"I conclude it is scarcely necessary for me to add, that my object in seeking you this morning was to consult on what is to be done."

"Is it your intention to acquaint George with his sister's ill-conduct?" I demanded, tremulously.

"Not for worlds!" he cried; "methinks my hand would be paralyzed as I traced the characters of guilt connected with one so dear; more especially when it was to convey such sorrow to George."

He paused, then exclaimed:—

"Would to God she might die ere his arrival! You start, Deerhurst, but I repeat the wish: would to God she might die, then her shame

might be buried with her. Yet the time is not long past since the very idea of Aigline's death would have checked the current of my blood."

He actually uttered a cry, struck his forehead, and rushed forward like one possessed. I followed slowly, without uttering a word. The whole scene had so confounded me, that I was like one under the impression of a fearful dream.

Mellish returned, and, again placing his arm through mine, said:—

"You must excuse me; my emotions are unworthy of a man—of a soldier—but I have no reserve before you. This confidence is a great blessing, so a truce to apologies. Shall I explain my views on this subject?—Of course you are too sincerely interested not to treat them with candour, and offer any objections that may arise in your mind; and, being less excited than I am, you are far more competent to judge."

I made no reply, and he proceeded:—

"George Tennant having appointed us trustees over Aigline's money, we have not only a right to inquire after her, but, in justice to the trust, are called upon to do so. Of course the unfortunate girl left Paris with Lord Beletrieve; when he, to elude his creditors, fled from it. But, Freville, to confess a truth, ever since she resided with him, I have never lost sight of him, and have certain information that he is at present living in the

neighbourhood of Norwich with an old uncle of his, a clergyman."

Here I interrupted him to remark, it was the general belief that he had gone to Russia.

Mellish answered, "Not he ; the report was circulated merely to deceive his London creditors. However, I understand he has great expectations from this same uncle, who, living in retirement, and little conversant with the *beau monde*, is in perfect ignorance of his character, so I have not been able to learn any particulars of Aigline, but conclude that she must reside in the town of Norwich under an assumed name. Oh ! what a degraded position ! and rendered still more hateful by her indifference—nay, you say antipathy to Lord Beletrieve. By what accursed infatuation she was led is a mystery I have never been able to comprehend. But it may be that necessity now compels her to continue with him, for, Sir Freville, after all our boasted protection to the softer sex, we men treat women cruelly ; once they fall, there is no return for them, and, though this may be good for society in general, it is often fatal to individuals—the cutting off a member, that the body may be whole."

I said somewhat petulantly, "All this is nothing to the purpose. Say, how have you resolved to act ?"

"True," he replied, sadly. "My object, then,

is to seek her out, show her George's letter, and, if you agree, purchase for her an annuity with his gift, thus rendering her independent also. La Franck by his scriptural knowledge and eloquence, will try and entice her back to virtue. Deerhurst, you can scarcely comprehend the goodness of La Franck; he means to offer our dear penitent the protection of his aunt, a most amiable, religious woman. Surely Aigline cannot be so wedded to vice as to reject these advantages. As to me, I dare not venture much into her society; but you, Freville, might see her, and use a brother's influence for this noble purpose."

It is needless to enter into any account of my feelings as he thus spoke. I do believe a man is scarcely ever so debased, as not to be shocked at finding those he has betrayed and injured place unlimited confidence in him. Here was Mellish spreading out all his thoughts before me, never doubting my sympathy, and yet at the very time the beloved of his soul was in my own house; worse, again, in a distant clime, after years of absence, crowned with honours, and blessed with independence, George Tennant turned to the companion of his youth, whose worth, judging by his own noble nature, he never doubted, and appointed me as one of the protectors of his adored sister. Yet within the hour I had been planning whether my own ulterior views would sanction

my blazoning forth her shame. As these truths pressed on my soul, they pronounced me a villain, a cold, calculating, selfish, villain ; and I call Heaven to witness, so powerful was the impression that I grasped Mellish by the arm, calling out fiercely :

“ What do you mean ? How dare you make use of such an expression ?

He looked vacantly in my face, repeating :—

“ What expression ? I was not conscious of having spoken.”

This brought me to myself ; the illusion fled, but the impression remained. We conversed for some time longer on the subject ; as I grew composed, I strongly advised him to lose no time, if he could so arrange, in proceeding to Norwich, and taking La Franck with him, expressing a wish that he would write me any information that he could acquire. Pleased at my entering into his views, he promised. By this time we had reached Paris, and we then parted. As he shook my hand, conscience gave another pang. I reflected that, disappointed in finding Aigline, he might get into a duel with Lord Beletrieve, and, such was my horror at the idea of his discovering Aigline, that I thought at the moment his death would have been a relief.

CHAPTER X.

I REMOUNTED my horse, and to remove the unpleasant sensation of self-accusation, began to argue, that after all it was not I by whom Aigline had fallen—wherefore then the crime? Had I been cold enough to reject her, all the world would have ridiculed, not applauded me. Such acts of self-denial and practical morality embellished poetry and romance, they being fables expressly got up to amuse the mind by wonderful acts of greatness. Then a few such were recorded in history; but their being handed down from age to age as wonderful proofs of virtue, proved in itself how rare were the instances; and though I had lately fixed on ambition as my good, it was political greatness or military, it was the exalted hope of having my lofty brow surrounded by a coronet, to be the Earl of Pondichery, or some such title, not to be held up to the rising generation as a proper, well-behaved young man, a second edition of Sir Charles Grandison.

Pshaw ! pshaw ! it was too absurd. Then I reflected, that should the discovery be made, Mellish, La Franck, and Tennant would perfectly abhor me. Spite of my sophistry, this caused me one bitter pang, for though I considered it as a weakness, I could not totally cast these companions of my youth from me, more particularly Mellish, so associated with Clara's memory. And yet I proceeded : " their anger will be all the result of prejudice." Truly the spirit of a Beletrieve must have taken full possession of my soul, when I deemed as prejudices, a lover mourning over his mistress's disgrace, a brother, a sister's shame, and a Christian minister, the depravity of one of God's fairest creatures.

Still, replete with these thoughts, I entered the *café* I had frequently visited, and in the frantic wish of smothering reflections, advancing towards a table, joined a party of foreigners remarkable for their dissipation. Though I had often before met some of them, I had rather shunned their society, but this only enhanced the pleasure of acquaintance, and they received me with marked deference. In my reckless humour, I readily assented to opinions I should have blushed to acknowledge, talked a vast deal, sneered at sensibility, mocked sentiment as affectation, and as far as an English officer durst, upheld revolution. Then I quoted Lord Beletrieve and Cosmopolite

principles, setting aside love, friendship, country, parents, religion; in short, it was an "Idiot's converse, all sound and nonsense," but unhappily full of evil afterwards. We spoke lightly of women, rapturously of music, and having come to the rational conclusion that they were the only objects in this dull, irregulated universe worthy a man's living for, we set off to one of the theatres. Music, and dancing, and merriment, and laughter were there; but as far as regards my own feelings, I can only compare the enjoyment to the frantic mirth, sometimes practised by the doomed, to banish the dread of coming evil. Such revel has intermingled with the loud roar of the storm, as some desperate crew felt sinking with their wrecked vessel, into the unfathomable depths of ocean; such sounds have resounded through the city over which hovered the angel of death, scattering around the pestilence: but there is no truth, no peace, in such mirth; it is but a seeming show, by which the lacerated heart strives to deceive itself.

The morning still found me in Paris, and though exhausted from the night's debauch, I would have called on Mellish to ascertain the day he proposed quitting it; but I had an unconquerable objection to meet La Franck, against whom I entertained an invincible dislike. Nothing could be more unfounded, as I had not seen him since we had

parted in Cork. I returned to the château in very low spirits: without commenting on my lengthened absence, Aigline entered into several inquiries relative to the opera and theatres, which whimsically enough she had taken a violent fancy to visit. I told her I was too ill to go, but hoped in a few days to be so far recovered as to attend to her wishes. This awakened her woman's tenderness, and for the next week she was all solicitude about me. I made my indisposition an excuse not to quit the house, and apprehensive, lest by some *contretemps* Mellish might again call at the villa, I remained on the watch. The sadder I appeared, the more Aigline cheered herself to amuse me. Independent of music, she possessed great powers of pleasing, and read and recited inimitably. Milton's sublime work of "Paradise Lost" was her favourite volume, and she read it with a justness and grace, that in itself would have commanded the attention of a crowded and admiring audience. As I listened, I could not avoid thinking that, in the enthusiasm of remorse at her degraded state, she likened herself to the apostate angels.

Tired of my retirement, without entering into any detail, I sent Lewellyn to the hotel where Mellish usually stopped, to inquire after him. On his return, he told me that Major Mellish, accompanied by another gentleman, had two days before

set off for Calais, on their way to England. This was a great relief; and I resumed my rides and walks with Aigline, but postponed going to the theatre, though she accused me of caprice and unkindness, saying I first teased to gain her consent, and then refused the gratification. A week passed, and nothing of any consequence occurred. It was then the first of May, rendered so memorable by its being the day appointed for signing the treaty of peace so interesting to all Europe. Of course I would not be absent on such an occasion, so early in the morning I left the château, promising, if possible, to return in the evening with all the news, and entreating of Aigline in the meantime, not to quit the house, as there were dark hints thrown out, that several French soldiers threatened to rise in opposition. I accompanied one of the nobles immediately engaged in the treaty, and thus took an active part in the negociations. As might be expected, Paris presented a gallant show, and the most violent excitement reigned throughout; for though to some the peace was a source of joy, many of the Parisians were discontented, and darker passions flashed from the eyes of the French soldiery at what they termed England's triumph; but as every circumstance connected with the imposing and short-lived treaty of 1814, has become a matter of history, I shall pass it over without further notice.

I dined in company with some field officers of my acquaintance; there were besides foreigners, two French gentlemen present, in compliment to whom no allusion was made to politics or any of the leading subjects of the day; thus we confined our conversation to general and trivial topics; and it was mentioned that two young Italians, just arrived from Naples, were that evening to make their *débüt* at the Italian Opera. One of the French gentlemen politely requested me to accompany him there, offering me a place in his box. At first I declined, but on his pressing it, and several present intimating their intention of going, I consented. Though I rarely exceeded moderation, my spirits on that evening were much elevated, having, in some manner, been obliged to drink with every person at table; and it instantly occurred to me that it would be an admirable opportunity of gratifying Aigline, so I said I should be most happy to go, if I was permitted to bring a lady, who was herself a first-rate musician. A polite assent was given, and a promise to reserve our seats: so, returning thanks, I hastened to the château.

I found Aigline strolling pensively up and down the little garden; she flew with pleasure to receive me. Observing that she was unusually depressed, I imputed it to the heat, but she replied with a sad smile: "Freville, I rather think it was a knowledge of the stirring scenes

going forward within so short a distance, and I so lonely here."

I caressed her with tenderness, and assuming an air of gallantry, declared that I had flown from every gaiety to accompany her to the Opera. She expressed gratitude, but said she would prefer a quieter time,—Paris was then too crowded. Half in fun, half in anger, I accused her of caprice, ever refusing when she had the opportunity, and explained, if it was observation she dreaded, the greater the number, the less likelihood of being noticed. At length, by my persuasion, or rather vehemence, I gained her unwilling consent, and at my desire she promised to attire herself in the most becoming manner. While she was so employed, I entered the house, and observed that the dessert and wine remained untouched on the table. Llewellyn, who brought in coffee, told me his mistress had started from her dinner, of which she had not partaken, ordered it to be removed, and rushing into the garden, had continued pacing up and down till my return. Even while he spoke she entered, looking surpassingly lovely. In general the style of her beauty was brilliant, but on this evening she was rather pale, and her countenance subdued to sadness. "High intellect and deep thought sat on her fine brow," exciting an interest to sound the depths of a soul from which sprang such expression.

Llewellyn had retired on her entrance, so freed from restraint, I expressed my approbation of her appearance, gently chid her for not having dined, and then selecting some of the most delicate fruits, pressed her to eat. She took some grapes, and a glass of wine, and pleased at attentions—too often neglected—became more cheerful; and as I stood up to ring for the carriage, she also rose, and laying her hand on my shoulder, in a low soft voice, said:—

“Freville, were you always thus kind, I should be far less wretched.”

I drew her towards me, and stooped to press my lips on her upraised forehead, when through a glass door or low casement, and which, in consequence of the heat had been left open, Charles Mellish entered, and before we were aware of his entrance, stood gazing on us. At the instant we both saw and recognised him: Aigline sprang from my side, uttered a deep low cry, and falling on her knees buried her glowing face in her spread hands. My sensations were too complicated to be analysed; but the shock,—for I was greatly shocked,—conquered the inebriety under which I had laboured; plucking up all the courage I could command, I turned fiercely on Mellish; but even my boldness was checked when I beheld him leaning for support against the wall, his dilated eyes fixed on the form of Aigline, who remained

prostrate and apparently motionless before him, his ghastly complexion forming a contrast to his dress. He was in full uniform, his parched lips wide open, and every fibre in his face working with agony. I apprehended that he was about to fall into a fit, and rushed towards him, but he was perfectly conscious, for he struck me off, in the effort reeled, and must have fallen, but for Llewellyn, who on the instant entered to announce the carriage.

With his usual shrewdness, the valet saw all was not right, and stepping forward he caught Mellish in his arms, drew him towards the casement, tore off his stock, and opened his vest, demanding loudly water. This roused Aigline ; her shame was forgotten in anxiety ; she hung about Mellish, giving every assistance, in piercing tones calling him her only true friend, the most generous, the best of men ; then as he recovered, with a distracted air she supplicated his compassion, the next moment desiring him to curse her. Weak and exhausted from the violent struggle of his passions, at first he seemed insensible to her attentions, and in my dread of his falling into a fit, I was indifferent to them ; but when he was restored, and I heard him in low tones thank her, my jealousy took the alarm, and in a stern voice I commanded her to retire to her chamber : she hesitated. Llewellyn who closely observed us all,

seeing my fury rise and dreading its results, in a respectful tone, said :

“Sir Freville, as this gentleman still appears very weak, would it interfere with your arrangements to permit me to accompany him to his hotel: the carriage is in waiting.”

Inwardly thanking him for the suggestion, in a tone of cold politeness, I said, “Major Mellish, my carriage is at your command;” turning to Llewellyn I added, “There is no need of your hurrying back, as I shall not go to the Opera this evening.”

I was then quitting the room, when Mellish rising, stood between me and the door, haughtily exclaiming :

“Sir Freville Deerhurst, we part not thus tranquilly !”

I confronted him with equal fierceness, but ere I could reply, Aigline had glided between us, and sinking on her knees before Mellish, in mournful accents exclaimed :

“Go, go, from this house of sin; go, and no longer interest yourself about an unhappy woman unworthy of your care; go, and if you would not add fresh tortures to the hell already burning within me, pursue not this quarrel with Freville Deerhurst; for mark me, all the guilt is mine! He knew not that I was in Paris—I sought him out, visited him in the night, stealing

on his retirement—" Tears choked her further utterance, and she sobbed violently.

"Can this be true?" said Mellish, as he wiped the drops of agony from his forehead.

"To my eternal shame it is," she murmured.

He was evidently much affected, and for some moments did not answer; then he stooped as if to raise her, for her head nearly touched the ground, but starting back without touching her, said :

"Aigline, you had better retire; after this terrible confession, my part in you is over; never again can you find any place in my thoughts. You never loved me: wherefore then shall I reproach you, and I were weak indeed could I permit one so lost to every better feeling to hold any influence over my destiny.

He was moving off, but still clinging to his knees, she raised her face towards him, crying out :

"One sentence ere we part, and for ever; accept my fervent prayer that, whatever be my doom, here and hereafter, yours may be blessed! And think not that sin ever held such dominion over me as to render me insensible to your goodness. When my feet slipped in the path of rectitude, all others helped to precipitate me forward into the fearful gulf of crime and sorrow into which I had fallen; but you would have sacrificed

your interest—nay, your honour—to uphold me. Oh, Mellish! had I been less sensible of your kindness, less enthusiastic in my gratitude, I had not been so degraded.”

She rose, and was retiring, when affected by her address, and agonized at the idea of never again seeing her, he lost all self-command; careless of my presence, or, perhaps, not recollecting it, he clasped her hands in his, and completely off his guard, in wild, broken sentences acknowledged his passionate love and despair at her position; entreating by all she held sacred, that she would permit her old friend and companion, La Franck, to visit her in his character of Christian Minister: that he would explain to her the means offered of her yet living respectably, and that, under his guidance, even though the world rejected her, she would make her peace with heaven.

“Aigline,” he continued, “you were not formed, you were not educated, to associate with the wicked—”

He was proceeding, when I rudely interrupted him by mocking at what I termed his methodistical doctrine, and again commanding her to retire.

Fearful of irritating me any further she obeyed; yet I almost regretted her absence when I found myself alone with Mellish.

He was the first to break silence by saying, in an angry voice:

“ Sir Freville, what am I to think of this business? Aigline must have been living with you on the evening we walked to Paris, when I mentioned the receipt of her brother’s letter: knowing it, how could you advise La Franck and me to proceed to Norwich in search of her? By Heaven, it passes credibility, that a gentleman—a soldier, could have stooped to such artifice!”

However insulting these words, I had no wish to resent them, as I hastily resolved, if possible, to gain him over not to betray the business to George Tennant. So evading a direct reply, I said :

“ Major Mellish, permit me first to inquire, by what right you this evening stole on my privacy unannounced? Also, why, when I sent my servant to the hotel to inquire after you, he was led to suppose you had left for England?”

He actually trembled with indignation as he answered :

“ My intrusion was, indeed, an interruption; but that is not to the purpose. The right which led to it, was past intimacy and friendship—there again, I can never err; for, from henceforth, Sir Freville Deerhurst, our acquaintance ends. By Heaven, I would not call you friend, though earth contained but us two! And now for your other question—why your servant was led astray as to my movements? On what principle, Sir Freville,

should I stoop to the meanness of deception? There is nothing in my conduct I need blush to acknowledge: your servant was told the truth. La Franck and I set out for Calais; while waiting there for a favourable wind, I received a letter to acquaint me, that owing to the recommendation of Lord Wellington, who had more than once honoured me by his notice, I was appointed to the Lieutenant Colonelcy of the ——. This event brought me back to Paris; but La Franck proceeded to Norwich, on the wild-goose chase you were so obliging to send us."

"My dear Mellish," I exclaimed, "let me first congratulate you on your promotion, still more on Lord Wellington's notice; that, indeed, is an honour any man in England must be proud to boast of; and now I ask your pardon for not having, on our last interview, mentioned that Aigline was residing in my house. Reflect calmly, and you will see the injustice of supposing I could betray her confidence."

He pressed his hand to his forehead without speaking; and, affecting a light tone, I proceeded:

"I am aware, Mellish, from our former acquaintance with Aigline, when, of course, no one could have anticipated her present position, also the boyish friendship existing between George and me, that our now living together, has an

awkward appearance ; but with all your methodism, Mellish—and I must admit that since your intimacy with Parson La Franck, you are most godly—you could scarcely expect me to marry Aigline.”

My affected indifference led me too far. I had wrung every fibre of Mellish’s heart. He, whose calm carriage in the field of battle had commanded the notice and admiration of the first General of the age, now paled before me. I saw him stagger from very weakness—the weakness of a tortured soul, while drops of agony poured down his face ; yet, he struggled hard to compose himself, and to treat me with the contempt I so well deserved. To this purpose, he went to the table, and, unable to stand, sat down near it, and drank some wine and water ; seeing which, I said :

“ Mellish, I entreat your pardon for anything I may have said to offend. The truth is, my position, in respect to Aigline, is so awkward, that I don’t know how to act, or what to say. By her own words, you know that until she sought me out, I was even ignorant of her being in Paris : to confess a truth, in deeper interests, I had nearly forgotten her existence. Now, Mellish, think of old times, and say, could I reasonably have been expected to reject the love of such a woman ? And, chivalric as you no doubt are, still, me-

thinks it would be rather a Don Quixote-like feat of errantry, to throw down your gage in support of her! However, should such be your intention, I am at your service," and I gave a sarcastic laugh.

"Not a man, but a demon!" he reiterated; "and lost as is that miserable woman, from my soul I pity her, for she is in your power. Merciful heaven! I did not think the human heart could be so cold, so callous, so indifferent to the feelings and happiness of others; but I pity, not envy you. Glory on, Sir Freville, in the selfishness which teaches you to forget the dead, and triumph over the living; but, insensible as you are, were I capable of your malice, I could send a pang through your heart, which would cause it a torture even more exquisite than what I now suffer."

"What mean you?" I said, tremulously: "is George Tennant dead?"

"You would rejoice if he were," was his cold reply.

"Mellish," I continued, forcing a smile, "we are bickering here like two school-boys. I again apologize for having offended you; at this instant you have your revenge, for your ambiguous words alarm me. Are Clara's sons dead?—In good or evil, anything connected with her memory is dear to me."

“ They are not,” he answered; “ and now, Sir Freville, let us set aside these objects of interest, and come to business.”

“ Business !” I repeated with unaffected surprise.

“ Yes, relative to money,” he answered; “ but perhaps it would be better for me to write on the subject.”

“ My dear Mellish,” I cried, with vivacity, “ if you want money, command me. You know I have thousands—tens of thousands at your service; nay, more, I shall feel obliged by your returning so far to our former confidence as to draw on me.”

While I spoke he looked quite furious, then exclaimed: “ Is it possible you can, for a moment, so insult me, as to suppose any extremity could compel me to accept a compliment from you? Or, has your mind become so debased as to think self-interest the guiding principle of all men? Sir Freville, my business is to tell you that, as fortunately the present peace permits me, without dishonour, to sell out, I shall resign the Lieutenant-Colonelcy, even at the risk of offending Lord Wellington, and then dispose of my majority; by which means I shall have nearly money sufficient to pay you for the purchase of my troop, also the money you sent me anonymously to Alicant.”

“ Good God !” I exclaimed, “ are you not mad,

under your circumstances to sell out of the army, and that too at the very instant Lord Wellington has taken you by the hand? Reflect, you have no other means of subsistence; that, indeed, would be paying dear for a woman's love."

"I have no other way of paying my debt to you," he replied; "and I tell you, Sir Freville, I would sell my body to slavery, and work for the residue of my life chained to the galleys, rather than continue under pecuniary obligations to a man I despise! You sneer, and think me romantic, absurd, prejudiced; be it so. I certainly am not a Cosmopolite to mock and ridicule every holier feeling and affection. As to Aigline's love, I never possessed it; happily now, also, I am aware that as she had before fallen, few will condemn your conduct relative to her; yet you cannot be so dishonourable, so ungenerous, as to keep her in ignorance of her brother's gift. At all events, as the money is lodged in my keeping, I will send a man of business to apprise her on the subject, and with that, being a legal measure, you cannot interfere; for though religion may be treated as an illusive affection, and duty as a farce, still until this wonderful advance of intellect sets the law aside, it is imperative; and though that too may be a prejudice, still even Aigline's case proves how necessary it is. And now, Sir Freville, farewell; should chance ever throw us together, we meet as strangers."

He was hurrying off, in his excitement forgetting his stock and hat, when I called out to remind him. While he was arranging his dress, I said :

“ Colonel Mellish, you lord it over me with a high hand : ungenerous enough—first, because my right wrist is yet too weak to guide a pistol ; next, because while you mock at other men’s prejudices you have your own, and I know object to duelling. However, you can scarcely doubt a gentleman’s assertion, and I solemnly swear I never forwarded any money to you anonymously, either at Alicant or any other place ; and if this assertion is not satisfactory, I have no objection to swear to the fact.”

“ This is very surprising,” he said thoughtfully. “ Except yourself or George Tennant, I know o no person likely to assist me ; and at that period George was on the distant seas, and by no possibility could have learned of my embarrassment—he had not even time.”

“ May it not have been La Franck ?” I demanded.

“ No : he is poor, and supports his aunt and sisters.”

“ After this, you of course will not dispose of your commission ?” I said inquiringly.

“ I still,” he sternly answered, “ am indebted to Sir Freville Deerhurst for the price of my commission.” So saying, he hastened from the apartment.

CHAPTER XI.

LEFT to myself, my forced spirits fled, and I yielded to the most painful and contrary emotions. Now almost cursing Aigline for having sought me out, and the next instant burning with consuming jealousy for her preference to Mellish, whose ambiguous words—that he could strike anguish into my soul—I verily believed were only spoken at random ; and I concluded on despising his friendship. What to me, who possessed so many advantages, could be the friends and companions of my youth, or the associations connected with them ? In the midst of these conflicting thoughts, Aigline entered, looking very languid, and the traces of recent tears were on her cheeks. Her dress, too, was dishevelled, and her whole appearance bore a look of abandonment, which contrasted sadly with the rich gems which sparkled through her dark hair, and the gay flowers intermingled with her dress. In quick, quivering accents she cried out :

“Speak, Freville, and say, is another sin to be added to my soul :—have you and Charles Mellish decided on a duel ?”

I answered coldly, “All this anxiety proceeds from love for Mellish—I hold no share in it; however, Aigline, I do not blame you; first love is ever the most powerful. I have long suspected that your fancy to me was the mere result of caprice, and I am now convinced.”

“This to me, Freville,” she exclaimed, bursting into tears. “But you are right: I deserve every humiliation.”

Looking coldly on her, I sarcastically added : “What tempted you to desert Mellish? There seems no lack of passion on either side; but as the proverb says : *de gustibus non est disputandum.*”

“Shame!” she passionately cried, “to taunt and insult a most unfortunate woman; but my very degradation, by rendering me reckless, gives me courage to fly. I no longer remain to be tormented by you.”

She was rushing from the apartment, but still glowing with jealousy, I caught her by the arm, saying :

“It is a scheme to fly to Mellish; but if you do I will challenge him, though I should be killed on the spot.”

“Say you have not already done so, and I will

forgive you all your cruelty," and she clasped her hands in supplication.

"Compose yourself, dear Aigline," I said, leading her gently towards a seat; "I assure you there is no intention of a duel between me and Colonel Mellish; and you must know he has just obtained a Lieutenant-Colonelcy through the interest of Lord Wellington. I tell you this because I know it will afford you pleasure."

She replied with animation, "Everything that tends to his advantage must please me; and, if goodness receives its reward, Mellish must be blessed."

This observation again awakened my jealousy—the jealousy of a weak vanity—and I answered sneeringly: "Perhaps he may be blessed by turning preacher under La Franck's auspices, for he is going to quit the army."

"And wherefore?" she demanded.

"Oh! from all his heroics; he is so indignant with me—I wish I could say because of your preference—that he vows by this and by that, by sword, pistol, blunderbuss, that he would not be under a pecuniary obligation to me for the throne of France—is not that the grand object of dispute of the present day?—so will throw up his Lieutenant-Colonelcy. No despair, I wot, to Lord Wellington, who can find gallant fellows enough ready to accept of it. Then he will sell out

of the army, to repay me the price of his troop, which he now regrets having ever accepted from such a man; nay, being a romancer, and, consequently, having met adventures, he insists that while he was at Alicant, I forwarded to him anonymously a large sum of money to relieve him from some pecuniary embarrassment; and, to repay this gift, of which I vow I know nothing, he is going into slavery, or some such freak. Upon my soul I think poor Mellish is moon-struck." I spoke this with an air of sarcasm and levity, though, in truth, I was oppressed with sadness.

Aigline, who had listened with the greatest attention, exclaimed with vivacity:—

"Oh, Freville, if possible do not permit Charles Mellish to sell out. He has no dependence, except his profession, to which he is such an honour. Can you not take the hint, and have some money conveyed to him secretly?"

I answered petulantly:—"Aigline, you forget that I am not at this moment very well pleased with Colonel Mellish; and most certainly shall not condescend to humour one whose spirit is too proud to accept of an obligation; so let him suffer, he well deserves it, and it will rather afford me pleasure."

"No, no," she passionately cried; "he deserves no ill; with him humanity and courage go hand in

hand. It was for my sake he first got involved; and, after all my sacrifices to save him from the stigma of cowardice, or the misery of distress, shall I now see him quit the army; and, when this short-lived peace—for all say it cannot last—passes away, and war commences, perhaps to enlist as a private soldier! I tell you, Freville, the very idea tortures me.”

“Ah,” I exclaimed, dashing away her hand, which she had laid on my arm; “for your sake he got involved; you should have been more wary in your entreaties, and not betrayed that secret. This proves you lived with Mellish, and he, most virtuous youth, had the effrontery to deny it—forsooth he fled from the temptation. Lying hypocrite, how sincerely I despise him! But I shall sift this business, and on your brother’s return explain all to him—then he can judge between us.”

I spoke at random, and in broken sentences, scarcely knowing what I said. Before I uttered the last words Aigline gave a fearful cry, and rushed up and down the apartment in a perfect frenzy, wildly tossing her arms and tearing her hair. No language can express my horror! Oh! how bitterly I cursed my mean jealousy that had led to such a result! Had I driven the hapless being to insanity? Had the heart so long tortured by conscious guilt at length broken? Witnessing

the spectacle of her woe, my own reason nearly failed. I just retained recollection enough to know that she tottered on the verge of madness. One word of either kindness or reproach might confirm it, so I remained passive, till at length quite exhausted, she flung herself carelessly on a couch, and, as I heard her convulsive sighs, and saw tear after tear rolling down her face, I actually fell on my knees to return God thanks. Oh, how naturally in extremity the greatest sinner feels that all power lies in his Creator !

Aigline was the first to interrupt the silence ; she rose, and, though tottering from weakness, advanced towards me. She was the very image of despair ; her long dark hair streaming down her shoulders, while, the flowers and gems with which I had obliged the poor victim to ornament herself, seemed a mockery of her woe.

I sprang towards her, and twining my arm round her waist, addressed her by every endearing name, entreating that she would be composed ; and, leading, or rather drawing her to the table, was offering her some wine, when, pushing me aside, she filled out a large goblet, and, before I was aware of her intention, drank it off.

“ Good Heaven, Aigline,” I cried, “ why have you taken so much wine ? You are already dreadfully excited ; let me lead you to your couch, and I will watch by you all night, and to-morrow,

when we are both composed, apologize for my ungenerous anger."

Again she uttered her fearful cry, as she exclaimed :

"Freville, I shall never be composed till you pledge your solemn oath not to betray me to George. Oh ! my brother, my honourable, gallant, high-minded brother, I deserve all the misery that blasts me, for bringing disgrace on you. Yet you will mourn over my fall, nor in your regret for the wretched Aigline think of the dishonour she has cast on your name."

Again she wept bitterly, while I uttered the most solemn assurances that I would die before I would speak lightly of her to George, and that she should obtain the same promise from Mellish.

"I need it not from him," she replied ; "amidst all my errors Mellish loves me—and true love never betrays its object—besides, he is the very soul of honour ; but, Freville, painful as may be the truth, your principles as well as mine have been tainted by the Cosmopolite doctrines of that Belial, Lord Beletrieve, and in becoming depraved, we have cast aside all holier feelings ; and, though there may be fellowship among the wicked, there can be little confidence, for who can depend on those who obey the impulse of their own passions ? You look angry, Freville, but, as in hap-

pier days I told you, the great difference that lies between us, is, that you rush blindfold on the path of destruction, whereas I, though without strength to retreat, behold the gulf of irremediable woe into which I am hastening."

She gave an hysteric laugh; I made no answer. After a time she said:—

"I must take some more wine; for, to satisfy all your doubts relative to Mellish, I shall relate the events connected with our meeting at Alicant, and it will explain the mystery of the money he received anonymously."

I took the goblet from her hand, observing:

"Aigline, you shall not drink it; and for this night I will not listen to your relation."

"Nay, Freville!" she vehemently exclaimed, "do not in all things thwart me—do not drive me to a revival of this night's anguish; it is necessary that you should hear all the facts relative to Mellish. Add not an additional pang to my regrets by letting him suffer: as to the wine, I merely wished to drink it to support me under the revival of past scenes;—however, it is better not; it irritates without relieving me—but to my explanation. I must insist on your listening."

Still I contended the point, and at length succeeded in prevailing upon her to retire to her chamber.

I saw little of Aigline during the three following days. She was taciturn ; yet when I regarded her unobserved, I could perceive that she was labouring under a high degree of excitement. On the morning of the fourth day, she entered my study abruptly, and placing a packet on the table, instantly departed. The reader will not doubt that, suspecting its contents, I snatched and tore it open hastily. It was headed "The Story of Aigline," and I give it, as it was written :

"Freville, I have already acquainted you with the particulars of my marriage with the McMisserton, and its subsequent events, until I joined my poor father in prison ; but to spare myself from dwelling on his melancholy fate, I omitted mentioning how, a few days previous to his death, he called a meeting of his creditors, the result of which was, they came to an arrangement to give him a few hundred pounds ; these he immediately bequeathed to me, and like every other event of my life it proved unfortunate, by rendering me in some degree independent, for I hastily resolved not to return to Glenlow Castle. Indeed, I had my doubts whether I should be received there ; consequently, after accompanying my father's remains to their last home, I removed to the neighbourhood of Richmond, where I engaged apartments in a secluded but romantically

situated cottage, outside the village, and there took up my lonely residence.

“Freville, you may remember while you were staying in London, my introducing you to a Lady Mainstown, a haughty dame, who, to oblige Lord Beletrieve, sometimes condescended to chaperon me;—well, Lord Mainstown died, and her Ladyship being left with a small jointure, removed to the neighbourhood of Richmond, and chancing to see me in church, the only public place to which I ever resorted, and being related to the McMisserton by the female line—condescended to acknowledge my acquaintance, claimed me as a connection, and constantly invited me to her house. Now, in all this there was not a spark of benevolence or friendship; the fact was, her vanity and love of society having survived her means of commanding it, she grasped at every incident likely to give her pleasure, or draw company to her saloon, which no longer offered many attractions. Aware of my musical talents, she paid me the greatest court. At that period my father had been some nine months dead, and my health and spirits being renovated, I gladly accepted her invitations, so far as spending a morning or evening in her society; but always, spite of her invitations and occasional fits of sullenness—for she was very ill-tempered—insisted on returning home to sleep.

‘ This intimacy, on both sides one of convenience, during the summer season was very agreeable ; but when the winter nights came on, to me it proved a constant annoyance. The few acquaintances of rank of which her Ladyship could still boast, had either gone to London, or at Christmas to their country residences, so to her Richmond was deserted ; then she had not a single resource within her own mind, while a fidgetty, discontented temper kept her in a constant state of irritation in seeking for excitement ; however, as her house possessed the advantages of a tolerable library, fine musical instruments, and occasional visitors, I submitted to her despotism, for positively her demands on my time and talents, amounted to tyranny. In this manner the autumn passed on ; but in January, our dulness was enlivened by the arrival of Lady Mainstown’s nephew, Captain d’Estonville Howard. He was the only son of Sir Horace Howard, and his mother, who had been a Mademoiselle d’Estonville, a very beautiful foreigner, and an heiress, died in giving him birth. This doubly endeared the child to Sir Horace, who, for his sake, resolved never to form a second alliance. While yet a youth, d’Estonville entreated permission to enter the army ; long Sir Horace resisted his wishes, but observing, that stimulated by the stirring wars then extending over Europe and

America, his military ardour daily increased, he at length consented, and soon after saw him depart to join his regiment in Canada. There d'Estonville continued for about two years, and was then ordered to Demerara, where he was attacked by yellow fever, very prevalent at the period. He recovered but partially, for his illness terminated in a low, intermitting ague. No sooner did the intelligence reach Sir Horace, than braving every danger, he set off for Demerara, remained there till d'Estonville was sufficiently recovered to undertake a voyage, then obtaining a certificate of his being too ill to attend to military duties, accompanied him back to England. Soon as his health improved, being very much engaged with parliamentary business—for he was a very violent politician—he advised d'Estonville to remove for a time to Lady Mainstown's. Such were the particulars with which, in her own prosy way, her Ladyship acquainted me on the evening previous to Captain Howard's arrival.

“D'Estonville came, and from that hour Lady Mainstown's dull residence was a scene of happiness. She really loved her nephew, and though she knew I was young, deemed beautiful, and separated from my husband—for I had confided to her the position in which I stood with the McMisserton—either from a total want of moral

feeling, or recklessness about others, or more probably from incredulity in the belief of those powerful sensibilities, of which she was herself incapable, she constantly exposed me to his dangerous society; for solicitous to renovate his broken health, and cheer his spirits, she looked upon me as the constant source of amusement. Oh! how willingly, for his sake, I brought into requisition every power of pleasing; the exertions which before had been a task, were now perfect enjoyment.

“Freville, I wish you had known d’Estonville. He was a noble and dignified person; his face could not be termed handsome, but it was engaging from its candid, playful expression; although at the period his health was delicate, still he was full of a buoyant, happy spirit, generous, gallant, enthusiastic; he was the very soul of honour, free from all selfishness, and almost faultless in his own character, he never spoke ill of others, and affliction from him ever found compassion and aid. Alas! in her love of hearing herself talk, Lady Mainstown had only awakened his sympathy in my behalf, representing my ill-assorted nuptials, my father’s untimely death, and my sacrifices for him—as in her selfishness she chose to call the simple performance of my dearest duty.

“Well, the winter passed on; my reading, my

music were every evening called forth to amuse d'Estonville; frequently Lady Mainstown was engaged to small parties in the village, for when it suited her purpose she could condescend to mix with an humbler class than her own. When we were thus left by ourselves, d'Estonville won all my secrets; and frequently in gentle accents, but with strong reasoning and manly sense, represented the danger of one so young, so fascinating, as he chose to term me, separating from her husband, and would press me to return to Glenlow Castle. But the horror I expressed at the idea of again living with the McMisserton, silenced him; so yielding on that point, he would advise that I should take up my sole residence with Lady Mainstown—who had invited me—representing that the annoyances and *désagréments* to which her temper would subject me, would be trifling considerations when put into competition with the invidious remarks to which my solitary position exposed me. Such were the general subjects of our *têtes-à-tête*; he advised as a brother, oh! why did he learn to feel as a lover—and I—but all these recollections of the past are agonizing, and of no avail.

“ March came; the weather proved unusually mild for the season. D'Estonville's health was quite restored, and at his request I laid aside my mourning; even Lady Mainstown complimented

me on my appearance, and I fancied with justness, for the exquisite though undefined happiness I daily experienced cast its glow over my countenance. In the midst of this delight—for it was delight—a letter arrived from Sir Horace, saying, that as he could not endure the idea of d'Estonville's returning to the West, he had succeeded in getting him exchanged into a cavalry regiment, then in Spain, and that he must get ready without delay to join the *depôt* who were quartered at Manchester. In conclusion, he added, 'I desire you, d'Estonville, on receipt of this, to make your adieus to Lady Mainstown, and join me to-morrow in London. Your health being re-established, there is no necessity any longer to trespass upon your aunt's hospitality; besides, as in a few days I must proceed to the North of England, I wish in the interim to enjoy your society.'

"The morning that this letter reached d'Estonville, as usual, I was on my way to spend the day with Lady Mainstown, whose villa lay at the distance of about half a mile from my lodgings. The direct path to it was partly through a meadow and partly through an avenue planted with alders. I had bounded over the stile that led into the latter, for the buoyancy of my spirits extended to my frame, and was tripping forward in my happiest mood, when Captain d'Estonville unex-

pectedly joined me. Struck by the sad expression of his countenance, I exclaimed :

“ ‘ Bless me ! what has happened ? You look ill—very ill.’ ”

“ He tried to smile as he answered : ‘ Nothing very serious ; on the contrary, I believe I ought to feel well pleased ;’ and drawing my arm within his, he handed me Sir Horace’s letter. As I read it I could not disguise my emotion, awakened by the surprise and regret I experienced at the idea of our immediate separation. Until then I had not even suspected how inexpressibly dear he was to me ; and the agony of my mind increased, lest discovering my sentiments, he might despise me for the weakness ; for I knew he had been educated in the very strictest ideas of morality, and, during all the solitary hours we had spent together, viewing me as the wife of another, had never made the slightest advance towards my affections.

“ I tried to mutter out some words of cold politeness—of surprise, at the suddenness of his departure, as he had proposed remaining three months longer at Richmond--overlooking that his father’s letter explained the whole business--then, with equal inconsistency, I said that, being severely ill all night, I was on my way to apologize to Lady Mainstown for not spending the day with her, but that as I had met him, he could

make my apologies. So saying, I hastily turned back, without looking up in his face, or bidding one farewell. For some time he remained immovable, without offering to follow; but, observing me stagger, he darted after me, and again drew my arm through his. This tenderness quite overcame me; I could no longer command my tears, which rolled rapidly down my face. All the time, d'Estonville never spoke; but, when we reached my lodgings, he supported me to the small reception-room, and then, with the utmost mildness, but the manly sense which throughout had marked his character, said, that, in the absence of my gallant brother, friendship should supply his place; and he again energetically advised me to reside with Lady Mainstown, or some other female friend; dwelling upon the awkwardness of my position;—and no doubt penetrating the state of my feelings, he added:

“‘I am selfish in the wish; for, after all the cheerful evenings we have this winter spent together, and your kindness in amusing me during the hours of ill health, it would be painful to have our acquaintance so totally ended, as not, Mrs. McMisserton, even to know of your existence. Whereas, if you are with Lady Mainstown, I shall, through her, hear every week, for she has promised to correspond with me.’

“Provoked and mortified at his coldness, with

as much composure as I could assume, I said, that it was my intention very soon to proceed to Ireland, where I still possessed friends; but that, in the meantime, if her Ladyship renewed her invitation, I should certainly accept it.

“He thanked me with calm politeness for taking his advice, then rose from his seat, saying, in a low voice :

“‘I shall make your excuses to Lady Mainstown.’

“His hand was on the lock of the door; I could scarcely suppress a cry as the idea of never again seeing him flashed across my mind; in a voice scarcely intelligible, I exclaimed :

“‘Captain d’Estonville, would it not be right for me, if my head-ache recovers, to go this evening to Lady Mainstown?—She may be offended: you know she cannot endure disappointment.’

“‘Oh! better—far better not!’ he exclaimed; and ere I could answer, without bidding me one adieu, he sprang down the stairs: the next moment I saw him darting by.

“Though I have since experienced such accumulated sorrows, such a sense of guilt, such remorse, still the misery of that day presses on my memory. For the first time I truly loved, with all the ardour—the sincerity—the devotion of which my enthusiastic nature was capable.

The last few months had been like a dream of rapture, for every day had been spent in d'Estonville's society, and with all the delicacy and refinement which then influenced me, while I could see him—hear him—converse with him, I asked no more: there was bliss in the very consciousness of being in his neighbourhood—of knowing that a few moments might bring us together;—but now he was gone, probably we should never meet again! and worse, oh! a thousand times worse, he felt no reciprocal affection for me! and, while my soul seemed to take wings to follow him to earth's remotest verge, he cared not for me—thought not on me! or, at best, considered me merely as a kind-hearted, unhappy woman, who, in some degree dependant on others, strove by every means to oblige and please.

“As these thoughts pressed on, my soul for the first time gave the reins to those frantic passions, which have since wrought my destruction. Now I fell into hysterics, then for hours lay prostrate on the ground; and thus the day passed on, and with evening I resolved at all risks to gain one parting view of d'Estonville, so, arranging my dress, I hastened to Lady Mainstown's. As I approached the house, I was dreadfully agitated; but, in the abandonment of my mind I was quite reckless, and, entering it with my usual familiarity, made no inquiries, but went up at

once to the saloon. D'Estonville was there alone, for Lady Mainstown had gone to one of her eternal parties. He looked miserably ill, and—but no, no, I must not dwell on the scene that ensued—enough. A mutual confession of our attachment ensued; the result was a passionate entreaty on his side, and a too readily granted promise on mine, that, whenever the McMiserton died, I would be his bride. God of heaven! the bride of d'Estonville! it could not be that such unalloyed bliss would be permitted on earth, translating it from a dark scene of trial and suffering to a paradise so perfect in its enjoyment, that the angels looking down from their high sphere might wonder and envy. Oh! no, no, sin and sorrow are mankind's natural inheritance; wherefore should I escape?"

"Solemn were the vows of d'Estonville that though twenty, nay thirty years elapsed, never would he unite his fate to any woman's but mine. I received these assurances in the same sincerity they were given, and then we were more composed, and I felt happy; for my love was no longer without return or hope, and I promised in all things to be guided by his wishes. During the whole time, the generous youth treated me with the respectful distance a fond brother would observe. Dreading Lady Mainstown's return, to

escape her observation I proposed returning home. He accompanied me to my door, and there bade me farewell. It afterwards appeared that our love-scene had not escaped observation ; and after d'Estonville's departure it was reported, and no doubt exaggerated, to her Ladyship, who, alarmed at our attachment, or perhaps from want of some other excitement to amuse her restlessness, wrote off to acquaint the McMisserton of my being then residing near Richmond, and from some motive, which I never could penetrate, extolled me to the highest degree, assuring him that since I had quitted his protection I had, to her certain knowledge, conducted myself with the greatest discretion. It is almost needless to say that I was kept in ignorance of this communication. It certainly was an after-thought of her Ladyship's propriety, for while she found me a convenience she had by her counsel upheld my separation from the McMisserton.

“To return to myself. For some days after d'Estonville's departure, my spirits were in such a tumult, I felt unequal to call on her Ladyship, satisfying myself by sending word that I was confined to my room by illness. After all her professions of regard and friendship, she merely sent cold inquiries. On the third evening, however, I resolved to go early, as I had some hope that

d'Estonville might have written to her, for he did not propose our corresponding; and though I ardently wished it, the offer with any delicacy could not have originated with me. Lady Mainstown received me with a great show of politeness. Coffee was ordered; and even while we sat at it, she received a letter which I knew to be from d'Estonville. Merely glancing at the direction, she put it into her reticule. Though burning with impatience to learn its contents, I could not summon courage to make a single inquiry; so after prolonging my stay as long as possible I had to return home disappointed, inwardly condemning d'Estonville, who, by not writing, left me exposed to all the suspense and uncertainty of never hearing of him."

CHAPTER XII.

“THREE weeks more passed on, and every day I lost favour with Lady Mainstown; the fact was, I could no longer minister to her pleasure. Anxiety and agitation choked my voice; when I attempted to sing, it became husky and unequal; and when she called for any air that d’Estonville admired, my fingers trembled over the keys; and as she really loved music, and had a just ear, this provoked her; then, spite of my efforts to appear cheerful, my thoughts wandered, and I grew absent and sad. In short, I was no longer calculated to play the dependant,—a position which demands the total subjugation of all one’s thoughts and feelings to the caprice or interests of others. You may be surprised, Freville, but the deference which, from vanity or ambition, we pay to rank, is just as humiliating as that to which poverty obliges us, and less excusable, because the calls of the latter are more imperative. However, I by no means regretted her Ladyship’s

change of fancy ; and when she chose an exceedingly pretty girl of inferior rank and tolerably well educated as a companion, I felt rejoiced at the release, and, quick at expedients, resolved on the following month to go back to Ireland, seek the protection of Mr. La Franck, your preceptor, Freville, and my father's old friend, for I had heard that his daughter and her aunt were then residing with him. This, too, afforded the ardently wished for opportunity of writing to d'Estonville. I should acquaint him with Lady Mainstown's having declined my company, which, though politely, she had done ; also to demand his approval of my plan of going to Ireland ; and in spite of my sex's reserve, which shrank from the idea of being the first to propose a correspondence, to entreat that he would occasionally write, if only to assure me of his safety. Having written this letter, I postponed sending it or Mr. La Franck's until the following Monday. It was then Tuesday ; but having resolved on my plans, my mind became more composed, consequently my voice and spirits returned, and Lady Mainstown, who found her new companion insipid and sulky, again finding me an acquisition, began to repent the active measures she had, during her fit of spleen, adopted to get rid of me ; but, alas ! the caprice of this weak, trifling woman sealed my destiny.

“I said three weeks had elapsed since d’Estonville had quitted Richmond ; two days since, I had forwarded my letters to him and Mr. La Franck ; and with trembling hope, I expected his answer, when to my perfect horror I received a long epistle from the McMisserton, of whom I had ceased to think, or only remembered as a barrier to my perfect happiness. Freville, I wish that in my anger I had not torn to atoms the unwelcome scroll ; for what with its quaint ideas, Scotch phrases and original style, it was well worthy of being preserved ; and now my memory will not enable me to do justice to it. It began with a lament that Miss Rachel was very unwell, and told of the half-boiled parritch and over-seasoned haggis he in consequence got from the empty powdered gilpey who acted as cook ; however, he expressed much hope of Miss Rachel’s recovery, from her youth, fine constitution, and the healthsome air of the Highlands. Then he entered into a long lecture upon my running off with such a randle fool as McDuff Gower ; but assuring me that, having ascertained we parted company in the city of Edinburgh, and that my true object in eloping from Glenlow Castle was to attend on my father, he, after due consideration on the justness of the act, granted his forgiveness, still gravely explaining how my first duty was to my husband. However, a mistake of duties in a winsome gipsy

was excusable, especially as I belonged to that unsteady people, the Irish.

“Of my poor father, he spoke with great contempt and resentment, at leaving me plackless; as of course had I inherited wealth, it would be his according to law; and he actually quoted different Acts of Parliament in support of this observation, expatiating on the extreme wisdom evinced in clipping as much as possible the wings of women, they being generally feckless in wit, much given to whimsies, and in all things changeable. He then alluded to Lady Mainstown’s letter; the high character she had given of my prudence; commended me for having settled near one of his kin, which he in his folly, and no doubt after due consideration, imputed to respect for himself, though, good man! I never knew of their relationship until long after I went to Richmond. After that, he acquainted me that McDuff Gower, his nephew, by the female line, and my quondam admirer, was on the eve of being married to a Miss Margaret Douglas, one of that ancient race, distinguished by the cognomen of the red, on account of their carrotty-coloured hair. He then complained rather bitterly, that for five hundred years none of that branch of the Douglasses, or for the same space of time of the Gowers, had been known to fail in issue, so there was no doubt but that in the expectation of Glenlow Castle, and its broad

lands, his nephew would have sons, aye, and daughters too, in abundance. He concluded his letter—which filled twelve pages closely written in his stiff, upright characters—by saying he was then in bonny Edinburgh, on his way to Richmond, where he hoped to join me that day week; and having given me such due notice, he expected I would not delay him above a day or so, as he should be impatient to get back, to pay, as in justice he ought, all due attention to Miss Rachel, a duty in which he hoped soon to be assisted by my gentler cares;—and then in his prosy, quaint manner, he went on to prove that attendance on the sick was a woman's peculiar province, and should be her delight.

“ I perused this letter with scorn towards the McMisserton, and indignation against Lady Mainstown. To return to Glenlow Castle and its hated master, even if I had possessed sufficient principle—which in truth I did not to make the attempt—was then impossible. True, in the illusions of my empty vanity, I had conquered, or rather subdued my natural antipathy to a man who, independent of the vast disparity of our ages, was in every respect abhorrent to my feelings, but a sentiment more powerful than vanity or ambition now mastered me. Wherever genuine love is felt, every other passion fades before its

influence ; and while d'Estonville engrossed my whole being, the proudest, the most endowed, might have bowed before me, only inspiring aversion, or at best indifference.

“ Prompt to act, my plans were quickly formed. On the following day I would set off for London, without bidding adieu to Lady Mainstown, who had acted so ungenerously ; I would write also to the McMisserton privately ; arrived in town I would seek a parting interview with d'Estonville, and then without even waiting for Mr. La Franck's expected answer, proceed to Ireland. Under such excitement I could find no rest, so the night was devoted to preparations for my final departure from Richmond ; my only uneasiness arising from apprehension lest d'Estonville might have joined his corps in Manchester. The idea of not again seeing him was agonising ; I knew Sir Horace had left town, for I saw it announced in the Times ; as to the McMisserton, strong in my purpose of never again living with him, I felt no apprehension about him.

“ I travelled in one of the public vehicles, and stopped at the Bath Hotel, as I knew Sir Horace's town residence was in its neighbourhood. I then wrote a few studied lines to d'Estonville, acquainting him with my arrival, being, as I said, on my way to Cork, and that having no friend or attendant with me, I would trespass on his

kindness so far as to request he would send his servant to engage my passage, &c. &c. for the day but one following. Not one word of wishing to see him, for as yet I had not laid aside the modesty and dignity of my sex. My agitation after dispatching this note was so violent, that the beating of my heart seemed audible, and I thought it would escape from my bosom, as I reflected that perhaps d'Estonville was gone; perhaps influenced by his high moral principles, would shun my society. These dreads led to such self-abandonment, that I used no efforts to guard against the danger that might attend our meeting. I was not long left to surmise. Ere I could have expected an answer, d'Estonville arrived, looking so brilliantly happy at seeing me. Without reserve I laid before him the circumstances of Lady Mainstown's treachery, my antipathy to the McMisserton, and resolve never again to live with him. He made some faint efforts to press me to return to Glenlow Castle, but I received them with tears and reproaches; these affected him, and he changed the subject.

“When more composed, we spoke of our approaching separation, and having once confessed our mutual attachment, all future reserve on that subject was over. He promised to assist me in going about some small purchases I wished to make, and also to see everything arranged for my

passage, and to put me on board : then we settled about our future correspondence, and this was our only consolation. When we came to take leave, he entreated that I would postpone my departure for a couple of days, as the probability of our again meeting was at best uncertain ; besides he argued, ‘ it will give you time to hear from Mrs. La Franck, and believe me you will feel more comfortable in being an expected guest.’ To this I readily consented, persuading myself of its propriety. The two days passed, and with them the pain of separation increased, and then we agreed that I should continue still another week. In the first place I had not heard from Mrs. La Franck, and in the next, by our both setting off the same day on our separate journies, the pang would be lessened by the excitement of travelling. At first I hesitated, for I felt my position awkward, but then no one knew of my being in London ; besides it looked ungracious to refuse d’Estonville, for one short week which would fly so rapidly, and I consented.

“ Freville, let me pass over some days without remark ; then a shade was flung over us by the McMisserton, who on arriving at Richmond, and finding that to avoid him I had fled, directed by the advice and machinations of Lady Mainstown, set off in pursuit of me ; and as I had taken no pains to conceal my folly, he soon traced me to

the Bath Hotel. To do him justice, he was far too honourable, once having heard of the step I had taken, to seek an interview, on the contrary he eschewed the very thought; but stimulated by Lady Mainstown, by jealousy, and by avarice, he sued for damages against d'Estonville; and here, though the suit was not decided for many months subsequently, I may as well mention its result. The McMisserton was cast. True, d'Estonville would have submitted to any distress sooner than give publicity to the circumstances; but strange to say, McDuff Gower of his own accord quitted his bride and appeared in the court to give evidence of the ungenerous manner in which I had been treated at Glenlow Castle; the despotism Miss Rachel practised over me; the stern prejudices imbibed by the Highland clan, and which endangered my life; the miserly conduct of the McMisserton in depriving me even of an attendant; and his cruelty in refusing to let me visit my dying parent. To all these truths, were added exaggerated praises of my good temper, cheerfulness and playful submission, until driven to despair by the report of my father's illness, when guided by affection I eloped to tend on him in prison; his death proving how necessary were my cares.

“No doubt the McMisserton's counsel, one way or another, would have set aside all this;

but the uncompromising truth of the General broke in on their sophistry. Interrupting them, he boldly admitted the facts, merely stating his own quaint reasons for so acting; finally he was cast with sixpence costs, and a sharp rebuke for not treating his wife with more tenderness and indulgence. Sad and discomfited he returned to his Highland home, rendered more solitary by the death of Miss Rachel, who had been gathered to her ancient race. The bitterness of his spirit increased by knowing that his long-collected wealth must ultimately fall to 'sic a claivering ninny as McDuff Gower, who betrayed kith and kin to flether a false jillet;' and after due consideration, he was obliged to admit that the legislation of England, which heretofore he had upheld as superior to that of any other people or country, was defective in justice. All this time he had not candour to reflect that his grievances originated in his own folly. To return to myself, I quitted the Bath Hotel, and with d'Estonville removed to Manchester, but not to his quarters. He hired for me a pretty cottage in the vicinity, about a mile and a half from the town, and as my trial was going on, and I could not endure to be seen, I lived in close retirement. Of course, before this period Sir Horace Howard must have heard of the whole distressing affair; but not suspecting that I continued with d'Estonville,

judged it more prudent to affect ignorance ; however, this is a mere supposition for which I have no authority.

“ Although d’Estonville’s love, if possible, exceeded mine, still its effects were not so fortunate, for his thoughts were divided between me and his father, to whom his filial attachment almost amounted to veneration; while towards me he experienced not only all the ardour of youthful love, but the honourable feeling, on which his high, manly nature refined, of affording every protection to the woman, who for his sake had forfeited her claims on society. Thus he treated me with a tenderness and delicacy exceeding that which he would have thought necessary, had I been his wife ; and to prove the depth of his affection and as rewards for the sacrifices I had made, he constantly purchased for me the most splendid gifts—far beyond what his income could afford—for Sir Horace was by no means wealthy, and, moreover, a very close man. Thus d’Estonville had little command of money. In this respect, nothing could be more inexcusable than my conduct. From unreflecting levity and the delight I experienced on receiving proofs of his affection—although one smile of approbation, one pressure of my hand as I did something to please, conveyed to me more sincere pleasure than all the gems the glorious East ever produced—still

I made no effort to check his extravagance. Freville, I dwell upon this, for his involvements, united to other circumstances, subsequently assisted towards my degradation.

“ We had been but three months in Manchester, when d’Estonville’s corps received orders to join the forces under Lord Wellington. It was late in June when we reached Spain. Removed from England and his father, the secrecy which he had before observed with regard to me, was cast aside. One circumstance alone checked his happiness : the McMisserton had not sought for a divorce ; thus he could not raise me to the position of his wife.

“ Freville, pass we over till the battle of Salamanca ; one of the most desperate ever fought, and I may add one of the most glorious victories ever gained by the gallant and immortal Wellington—at least such it appeared to me, for there the heroic d’Estonville, who belonged to the cavalry under Sir Stapleton Cotton, gained his first laurels, and returned unwounded to satisfy all my doubts and hopes. Oh, Freville ! after hours of such agonizing fears as the sterner heart of man cannot even conceive, after for a day and night hovering about the scene of death like a troubled spirit, resolved, if d’Estonville fell, to rush into the very din of the battle, and amidst the roar of cannon terminate my then wretched existence ; how

think you did I receive this great mercy? Not by prayer and thanksgiving, for I had become a reckless, sinful being. All the pious thoughts of my youth, associated as they were with my poor mother's memory, were quickly fading from my soul, and when my hero, my idol returned to me once more, I prostrated myself at his feet, kissed the very ground he trod on; and if I deluged it with tears, they were the overflowings of joy, not of gratitude or penitence to an offended God.

“You are aware that the capture of Madrid soon followed the conquest of Salamanca. Thither, in a few days, I accompanied d’Estonville, whose tenderness was, if possible, increased by the sensibility I had displayed for his danger; and now indeed all the imaginings of my youth seemed realised; those wild fancies which my mother early in life observing, and from her quiet good sense and reflecting temper foreseeing the errors to which they might lead, had taken such righteous pains to conquer, or at least to implant in my mind principles of religion which would regulate their indulgence. How fruitless her cares proved, it is needless now to say; moreover, to you, Freville, who by your vivid description of Cadiz, your tales of superstition, wild legends of the past, and anticipated adventures for the future, so helped to nourish my craving after the marvellous.

“ And now I was in Madrid, the proud residence of Castile’s proud kings ; and though the days of her chivalry and greatness had passed away, still in the pomp and gloom of her religion, her mystic laws, her numerous monasteries and convents, the magnificence of her royal palaces, and the graceful costume of her exquisitely-formed daughters, enough remained to satisfy and increase my love of the romantic ; while all received interest and effect from the crowds of heroes and foreign soldiers who crowded her streets, intermingling the harsh tramp of war with love’s soft serenade. And d’Estonville Howard was at my side ; his gallant, manly spirit, subservient to my will, obeyed my lightest caprice. Sometimes he accompanied me to the Manzanares, and as we strayed down its classic banks, charmed by my every folly, would delight in hearing me, whose memory is well stored with ancient lore, relate some chronicle of the past, or sing some warlike ballad ; at others we would ride forth through groves of olives and oranges, or where the vine’s tender tendrils, clinging to all of strength for support, scattered their luscious clusters around. Above us shone the heavens, clothed in the south’s glowing light ; beneath our feet sprang innumerable flowers, perfuming the air ; all was a scene of exquisite harmony : the very embodying of a poet’s dream.

“ My spirit became so exalted, that though war, and desolation, and sickness, and death reigned around, in the concentration of my idolatry, I felt not for others. I dreaded no ill to d’Estonville—no, not even when I learned that preparations were being made for the siege of Burgos—for my love shed the halo of immortality around him; never did the infatuated Hindoo more sincerely worship her Juggernaut. D’Estonville partook not of my hopes, guessed not the charmed life with which my idolatry endowed him; far from it, he was perfectly alive to all the dangers that might attend the approaching struggle; and though his brave heart could boldly encounter the strife, his better principles shrank from being ‘cut off in the very flower of his sin.’

“ These feelings of compunction were aggravated by a knowledge of having incurred debts which he had no immediate means of paying; and this to one so just and honourable was in itself sufficiently depressing; but a deeper grief preyed on his spirit. He had received a letter of remonstrance from his father, representing the disgrace and evil consequences of his attachment to me, and the certain demoralization to which it must lead. In affecting language, Sir Howard dwelt upon the tenderness with which from infancy he had treated him, never, for his sake, forming a second alliance, and

offering, if he immediately separated from me, to liquidate all his debts ; also to grant him means of providing for me. In conclusion, he said, ‘ D’Estonville, if you refuse this, my just request, from henceforth I renounce you ; and bear in mind, whether in a distant land, exposed to the havocs of war, or the more insidious attacks of disease, that while you live with this creature, who, in defiance of every tie human or divine, fled from her husband’s home, you bear no father’s blessing to shield or support you ; and this I call my God to witness.’

“ Too generous to separate from me, and far too refined and sensitive to mention Sir Horace’s stern purpose, d’Estonville kept me in ignorance. This was most unfortunate, for the same unreflecting vivacity which often impelled me to rush into error, would have exalted me above every selfish consideration ; and desperate as must have been the struggle, I would have fled sooner than see him gradually sinking under the consciousness of a father’s displeasure. But perfectly unsuspecting, I strove to cheer him by a greater assumption of gaiety, rallying him on his fears ; and when he gravely answered that he did not deny having a presentiment of not escaping the siege, so far did my imagination lead, that I perfectly ridiculed the idea. You will smile, Freville,

when you read this, but enthusiasm is a species of insanity, and mine had taken the highest flight.

“ Unhappily, most unhappily, d’Estonville mistook my levity for want of feeling, and comparing it to the sensibility I had shown previous to the battle of Salamanca, came to the rapid and unjust conclusion that my love for him was on the wane, and that I viewed his approaching danger almost with indifference; and this idea, after the sacrifice of filial duty he was making for me, almost distracted him, and I fear rendered him reckless and unguarded. It was not till, disenchanted by despair, that I acquired a knowledge of these facts—I should say thoughts—and then it served no purpose but to add poignancy to a grief such as, I trust, few are doomed to suffer.

CHAPTER XI.

“ I ACCOMPANIED d’Estonville to the neighbourhood of Burgos, though he pressed me to remain in Madrid. His doing so awoke the first anxiety I had known since we were intimate (save what was connected with the war), for I thought it proceeded from indifference. Thus, while we perfectly adored each other, we admitted secret doubts. Mine soon vanished, but his temper was darker, more suspicious, and less ingenuous ; so, though he daily saw me submit to privations and scenes for which my sex was unfitted, he retained his suspicion that the ardour of my passion was fled, and were he to perish, that his death would not so deeply afflict me. Now that this idea had taken possession of his mind, he tortured every word and look of mine into some argument to support it, until it became a canker in his heart.

“ Oh ! surely in the variety of human misery there is not a sharper pang than to believe the

love which was once solely ours, and on whose consistency we built our earthly hopes, is rapidly fading, while by one of the mysteries of our nature we cannot seyer the link that unites us to the chosen object.

“ I should have mentioned, that shortly before I quitted Madrid, I had the good fortune to meet my former attendant, Ellen Mulcahy. You may remember she lived with me at Glanmire, and afterwards in London, and it was through her brother Pat, who at the period of Lord Chancery’s business was footman to Lord Beletrieve, that I acquired a knowledge of his Lordship’s secrets.

“ To speak of Ellen. Sincerely attached to me, she adhered to our fallen fortunes, and accompanied my father and myself to Scotland, and on my marriage with the McMisserton, I brought her to Glenlow Castle ; but Miss Rachel, provoked at her not admiring Scotch provisions, had her sent off, and the General refused me another attendant in her place. After that Ellen married a corporal, and went abroad, and I lost sight of her ; but happening to be quartered in Madrid, and—as she afterwards acquainted me—hearing who I was, and with whom, she sought me out, and, though by no means shocked at my position, had the good taste to make no remark upon it. On the following day she came to my

lodgings. I received her with sincere pleasure, and offered to take her into my service; but she declined, as she could not quit her husband and children. The former, d'Estonville soon after promoted to the rank of serjeant; this excited her gratitude, and few mornings passed without her calling to tender me some attention, and spite of the apprehended danger, on my account, she regretted that her husband did not belong to the troops ordered for Burgos.

Whether to win back my affection, which mistakenly he supposed to be wavering; or to disguise his innate uneasiness, I know not, but d'Estonville's manners again became all tenderness and assiduity; this delighted me and kept up my delusive hopes.

“I shall pass over the preparations for the siege; (to those connected with them they were so absorbing as to swallow up every other consideration) and come at once to its results. D'Estonville was appointed to some command—I think under General Pack—but I am not positive, for the anxiety of that period was such as to confuse my memory relative to all events, save one too terrible to be forgotten. Freville, I must hasten over this part of my sad tale; accordingly I shall not enter into any particulars of the siege. From the instant the storming the fortifications on Saint Michael's Hill commenced, my courage

failed ; still, in my mistaken view of encouraging d'Estonville, I preserved my appearance of gaiety. He was with me on the 10th of October, and remained that night, but told me that he should lead on his troop early the following morning, and that a mine was to be sprung. We dined together, and our meal passed off cheerfully. He arose soon after, saying he had letters to write. I entreated to accompany him to his room, for it was my wont to sit by his side when he was employed. With tenderness, but fixed determination he declined, promising not to delay. Two hours might have elapsed, when he again joined me. I observed that he looked unusually pale and sad, and there was a flush about his eyelids as if he had been weeping. I know not what folly, what madness tempted me, but with bad taste, I rallied him about it. He seemed surprised and agitated—then in a voice of mixed sorrow and anger, gravely replied : ‘ Aigline, I should rejoice in the want of sensibility, which if I should fall, as is at least probable, will prevent you from regretting me too deeply ; yet,’ he continued with a forced smile, ‘ it speaks little for my powers of pleasing, when a love, for which I have sacrificed so much, has proved so evanescent.’

“ Shocked beyond measure, I was going to explain the true state of my feelings, when some

officers came in on military business ; consequently I retired, and it was late ere d'Estonville joined me. He looked fatigued, but with my usual ardour, I was commencing my explanation, when he quickly said :

“ ‘ Not now, Aigline, not now : I would, if possible obtain a few hours’ rest to recruit myself for to-morrow’s hard work. Should I escape, we can talk at leisure ; if not, it is of little consequence.’ So saying, he hurried into bed, and closing his eyes affected to sleep, and soon after did so in reality.

“ I had no intention of seeking rest. First, I arranged all his dress, that in the morning he should have no unnecessary delay, and thus might longer enjoy his repose ; then placing the night lamp, so that I might gaze on him without the light flashing on his eyelids, I sat by his couch, placed his hand between mine, and divided the dark hair from his high forehead to which I every now and then pressed my trembling lips. As the hour of peril approached, my sanguine hopes lessened, and in an agony of dread I knelt by his side and fervently prayed for his preservation in danger ; but not one orison in my impiety did I utter for his future happiness. And so the night waned, and the autumnal morning rose with all its awful preparations, and the din of battle sounded around, and thousands, who never again hailed the sun’s

rising, sprang gaily from their rest, to join in the inhuman strife of a criminal ambition. All this I witnessed, and I leant over the couch, and in whispering accents, said :

“ ‘D’Estonville, my only life, rise.’ ”

“ He started up exclaiming : ‘ Ah ! is it you, Aigline, and not in bed all night ! how is this ; I must be angry.’ ”

“ I answered caressingly ; ‘ Though you accuse me of not loving you, I could not rest on the eve of your danger.’ He pressed me passionately to his breast, then looking from the window exclaimed :

“ ‘ I must be quick ! not a moment to spare.’ ”

“ I assisted him to put on his dress, now and then pausing to admire its trappings. Yes, it was my voice awoke him ;—it was my hands adorned him for the sacrifice. I deserved to be punished, and the curse has fallen heavy on my soul.

“ We heard the tramping of his charger as it stood at the door. Again he gave me a wild embrace, exclaiming :

“ ‘ Aigline, I must be off !’ ”

“ Already with a bound he had cleared the stairs. I rushed after him ;—at the door he turned, saying :

“ ‘ No tears, no tears, you must not unman me.’ ”

“ I dashed them away, and smiled in his face :

“ ‘Pray for me, Aigline,’ he exclaimed emphatically.

“In the midst of my tears I answered : ‘The prayers of the wicked are of no avail.’”

“I saw him shudder and grow ghastly pale, as he mournfully rejoined :

“ ‘True ; then I go to the field of battle unaccompanied by a single blessing !’

“With these words, and ere I could reply, he sprang on his horse, which tossing its flowing mane, impatient of delay, sprang rapidly forward—a moment, and it was lost to my view.

“With d’Estonville vanished my confidence, and I gave way to all a timid and devoted woman’s apprehensions. Oh ! for oblivion of that day of horror, as running frantically along I heard the loud discharge of the musquetry, and the cannon’s deadly roar ; and more fearful still, the rushing noise of the springing mine, followed by the tremendous crash of the falling battlements ;—and d’Estonville Howard was exposed to all.

“Towards evening my suspense rose to such a height that at every risk I resolved to obtain intelligence. With a promptitude and desperation originating in despair, I returned to our quarters, rolled up my hair, fastening on my head a helmet, which being too small for him, d’Estonville had cast aside, disguised my woman’s dress under a braided surtout, and over all threw a large mili-

tary cloak ; and then I went to the stable where one of d'Estonville's chargers, in the event of being required, was kept in readiness. It was a high-spirited animal which many of the troop would have hesitated to ride ; but in my absorbing anxiety every thought of self was forgotten. In a moment, assisted by an old groom, who stupified by tobacco and terror, never commented on the strangeness of my conduct, I changed its saddle for a side one, and sprang on its back ; while my cloak falling over, completely disguised my person. Scarcely conscious of my weight, and snuffing the battle with a loud neigh, it bore me rapidly forward to the scene of carnage.

“ It might be, I suppose, about two hours, perhaps more or less, after the breaches had been effected, that, borne by my wild steed, I was carried into the very front of the danger. It appeared that some of the British troops had actually entered the works ; but, the incensed and undaunted garrison, with a courage fully equal to their resolute assailants, poured forth such a heavy and constant fire, as obliged the besiegers to retreat ; and this, spite of their gallantry and discipline, created much confusion in their ranks. By what means, as I dashed through every danger or impediment, I escaped, it would be impossible to determine ; but I seemed to bear the charmed life which I had imputed to my less fortunate

lover. At length, my loosened helmet fell to the ground, and my long hair, unbound from its confinement, floated around, and for the first time I commanded observation. It was but cursory, for in that stirring scene events which at another period must have awakened curiosity, were unheeded; and on I went till I actually stood within one of the breaches, and above me was placed a large piece of ordnance, surrounded by French engineers. Whether from exhaustion or terror, I know not, but I felt the war-horse quiver in every limb. This roused me for the first time to a sense of my personal danger. At that instant, I felt my arm grasped; turning round, I beheld an officer of dragoons, who, ere I could speak, exclaimed:—

“‘Merciful Heaven! then I was not mistaken. It is, indeed, Mrs. Mc Misserton I see!’

“As he addressed me I recognised in him McDuff Gower, my guide from Glenlow Castle, no longer an overgrown gawky youth, but a fine-looking soldier, his tall stature, yellow hair, and light blue eyes, bespeaking his Celtic origin.

“‘Oh, Mc Duff Gower,’ I cried, ‘blessed be the chance that has led you to my side. D’Estonville Howard is engaged in this terrible battle. Oh! quickly lead me to his side, and for that good act may the angels of heaven shield you in this hour of danger.’

“‘My dear lady,’ he replied, ‘this is no place for your gentler nature. At all risks I must convey you away,’ and he grasped my horse’s reins.

“‘Never,’ I interrupted, ‘till I see d’Estonville. A thousand deaths to myself were preferable to the very apprehension of his danger.’

“I paused, for at the instant the great gun was discharged; its fiery balls bounded over us, and for some instants the stunning noise and sulphurous smoke overcame me. Perfectly collected, Mc Duff had dragged my horse under the shelter of a bastion, and, again addressing me, he said :

“‘Mrs. McMisserton, believe me our late escape has been most providential—I may say, miraculous; but if we remain here, probably the next discharge will destroy us both. Take courage, then, and as I ride forward keep to my side. Your steed, weakened and exhausted, will now obey your hand.’

“I answered with childish vehemence, ‘Never will I quit this field alive till I see d’Estonville Howard. Think you the sentiment which brought me to it is so weak as to yield to personal fear? Judge more truly, Mc Duff, and, remember, that excess of love is the sole excuse for as it is likely to prove the punishment of my crime. But risk not your life, your honour, by remaining at my side. Go to your place; and for your kind-

ness to me, may God grant you the blessing I have forfeited ;' and I burst into a passion of tears.

" 'It were a poltroon's part from any cause to desert a woman in such extremity,' exclaimed the noble Scot ; 'least of all, you, Aigline, whom to protect from danger I would almost risk a soldier's honour.'

" He paused, and then in a voice choked with emotion, continued :

" 'Your position requires that I should be candid ; yet when I witness these tears, this union of your sex's tenderness, with man's desperate resolution, how can I bring myself to acknowledge the fatal truth, that your search after Captain Howard is vain ! One of the first to enter the works, he fell :—let his bravery, his honourable death console you. Merciful Heaven, support her !'

" I heard no more : I uttered a fearful cry ; my terrified horse reared, and would have dashed my helpless form to the earth, but McDuff Gower had sprung from his, and by catching me in his arms saved me. Oh ! why did he not let me perish ! Why preserve my wretched existence for accumulated disgrace and suffering ? Freville, all I have related, from my entering the field occurred within the space of a few moments : for

subsequent events my mind was confused. I remember sternly refusing to believe that d'Estonville was dead. I persisted that he *could* not *die*; and then I struggled not to quit the breach till my reason was convinced by seeing his remains. At first, McDuff Gower attempted to persuade, then he strove to force me away; but the whole British army could not have torn me from my search. At length, overcome by my entreaties, he led me to the very spot where the fortifications had been first stormed, and there, amidst rubbish, huddled together with one or two more bodies, lay—Heaven! surely this was not the manly form of d'Estonville Howard, so lately my heart's idol! From the very depths of my agony, I acquired composure. I knelt by its side, and, with stern resolution, began my fearful examination:—a bracelet of my hair—it was my first gift—encircled the shattered wrist. I tore open the breast of the shirt, it was marked and crested by my own hands; again—but it is needless to say—there was no mistaking. Oh, God! and yet I lived. I dashed myself on the lifeless body, clasping it to my bosom of life and love; but nature usurped her rights, and with shrieks of despair, I sprang from the breathless clay: rushing forward, I stumbled over some heap, and was stunned by the fall. It seems McDuff had

followed; a musket-shot grazed his neck, and bounding upwards, lacerated his ear, but the gallant Scot winced not. Taking the helmet from his head, he placed it on mine. At that instant, his commanding officer, who had collected the troops, and was leading them on to the onslaught, called him loudly to his station: there was no alternative but military dishonour, so, consigning me to the care of a soldier, with the promise of a large reward if he conducted me back in safety, he galloped to his corps, and resumed his place. Kind McDuff!—scion of an ancient race, of the boasted ancestry of the McMisserton, never did a more warlike or generous spirit inherit the broad lands of Glenlow Castle, or better grace the noble house of Gower.

“By what means I was borne back to my lodgings, I know not, for I long remained insensible; but when my faculties were restored, I found myself lying on the couch from which d’Estonville, in youth and health, had so lately arisen. I thought on this, and tried to weep, and to bring back the memory of his love and tenderness; but it would not be. No tear cooled my scorching eyes, and, in place of his manly form, the pierced and breathless body that lay beneath the fortifications of Saint Michael’s Hill, rose to my view. Shrieking with horror, I called

for lights to banish the fearful phantom ; but still it was there. I extinguished the candles, and sought profound darkness ; but it mattered not, the impress was on my spirit, and wherever I turned it rose before me. Oh, Heaven ! it was very fearful ; and I strove, by looking at his clothes, and the numerous gifts he had presented to me, and the little study where he was wont to sit, to turn the tide of horror into that of grief ; but my efforts failed, and for two nights my sufferings were such as, to our human apprehension, can hardly be exceeded by the torments of those doomed to eternal woe. Another night, in time, rolled on : but ages of misery passed over my soul. I lay prostrate on the ground with a shawl wrapped round my face. I could not endure the light of Heaven, or that any body should see me. I was conscious of nothing, but that voices occasionally broke on my ear. I had been offered food, but with cries I dashed it away ; for, at that moment, the terrible apparition seemed to stand before me. During all this, no pains were taken to soothe or support me : none felt any interest in my fate ; and except where sincere attachment existed in the excitement of the war, individual suffering awakened no sympathy. Towards the third morning, I was seized with a consuming thirst, and none were near me,

so I rose, and staggering from weakness, looked around for some liquid: a flask of wine met my view. I took a deep draught, and again sank on the ground. It acted on my frame, weakened by suffering and hunger, as an anodyne, and I sank into a heavy sleep, which lasted for eight and twenty hours. I awoke unrefreshed; my heavy moans attracted a Spanish woman who was in my service; she raised my head, with some kindness offering me bread and milk. I could not eat; but my thirst continued, so I drank freely of the latter. The Spaniard soon retired; a profound silence reigned around; no words can do justice to my desolation, and, unhappily, my mind was quite restored to an entire and dreadful consciousness.

“As the night closed in, thoughts of my endless grief pressed on my soul, and again the bleeding image of d’Estonville rose to my view. I could not endure such repeated horrors; I called loudly to the woman, but she was gone. I rang the bell with violence, but none were within hearing. Some event had drawn all from the house, and I remained in perfect solitude. To escape from myself, I flew from chamber to chamber. At length I entered one where a table was laid out with refreshments. I remembered the dreamless slumber of the past day, and I grasped a goblet full of wine and drank it off.

Had it been poison, to banish memory, I had done the same. It circulated through my veins like fire. With unsteadfast steps I reached my apartment, and sank on the couch in an insensible state.

CHAPTER XII.

“FREVILLE, I have since learned that scarcely had Sir Horace Howard despatched his letter to d’Estonville, than, repenting its contents, he resolved to proceed to Madrid, and try by gentle means to wean him from me. By what route he pursued his journey I know not, but it must have been a tedious one; for, on arriving in Madrid, he found his son had proceeded to the siege, whither without loss of time he followed, but did not reach Burgos until the twelfth of October, the very day after d’Estonville’s fall, and though pains were taken to break the sad intelligence, it nearly deprived him of his reason. Happily he could not see the sad remains, for by the directions of the commanding officer, they had been already coffined.

It was not until the fifteenth that Sir Horace was sufficiently composed to enter into any particulars; he was then presented with a letter, which, in the event of his death, d’Estonville had

left with his colonel to be presented to him. The perusal of this affected him so violently, that medical assistance was found requisite; however, on the following day he entered into several inquiries relative to me—my beauty, my accomplishments, my devoted attachment to his lamented son; and (except in the one article of my guilt) the strict propriety of my conduct were extolled. This evidently pleased Sir Horace, and he resolved to visit me, saying that his departed son had solemnly commended me to his care. It must have been a severe trial to the bereaved and honourable father to meet in kindness the woman who, as he conceived, had led his child into error; but, softened by affliction, I have every reason to suppose that at the period he sincerely commiserated my sufferings, and anticipated some consolation in obeying poor d'Estonville's request. As Sir Horace continued very weak and ill, two or three officers of rank, his particular friends, insisted on accompanying him, on what they justly termed his painful duty; accordingly they proceeded to the house where I lodged.

“ Well, Freville, as I have frequently remarked, the tide of circumstances has always run against me; thus on the evening of Sir Horace's visit, the people of the house chanced to have a carousal, and the first sounds that met his ear were those

of dissolute merriment. Shrinking from a scene which seemed a mockery of his woe, he hastily inquired after me, and with his friends, was shown up to my immediate suite of apartments : passing on he entered my sleeping room.

“ Oh, Freville, how can I proceed to relate my shame, my disgrace,—think of the surprise, the horror of the high-minded, refined, fastidious Sir Horace when, advancing towards the couch, he saw me, not in tears, and mourning for his departed son, but lying in a stupor too evidently caused by wine.

“ On discovering me in such a state, the conjecture never once entered his mind, that my over-wrought spirits, and my mental agony had superinduced a delirium, which could not calculate, or was for the moment careless of consequences. No, he at once concluded that the revel below stairs, which he had the moment before witnessed, was at least suffered by me. Shuddering at the idea, he naturally groaned aloud, and would have fallen back, had not the officers supported him ; while I, seeing their uniform, and forgetting my despair, fancied d’Estonville returned, and made an effort to rise, to reach out my hand to welcome him with tenderness,—and then a dizziness seized me, and I fell back with an hysterical laugh. One word had been sufficient to explain, and to acquit me of this, in a

woman, the greatest of degradations ; but I was unconscious of what was passing, and no friend was near to take my part. Even had Sir Horace learned of my rushing to the siege in quest of his son, he might have imputed the act to its true cause, desperation, but in all things, be they great or small, from the period of my mother's death, my evil destiny prevailed, and hurried me on to destruction.

“ After gazing at me for some time with mixed pity and contempt, Sir Horace said : ‘ Gentlemen, this is a shocking spectacle of youthful depravity, but it is not without its use ;’ clasp- ing his hands together, he continued, ‘ an All- wise being has been most merciful : better, a thousand times better, that my misguided son should have died a hero's death than have lived to be the companion of this wretched creature Alas ! d'Estonville,’ he sighed, ‘ how passion must have corrupted thy whole moral nature, when thou couldst sacrifice thy interests, thy father, thy principles to such a being. Almighty God ! in thy goodness, accept his early death as a peace- offering for his sin !’

“ So saying, he retired with his friends. Soon was the tale bruited abroad, and the praises that shortly before had been lavished on me were recalled. Some few (oh, why are their number so few) regretted that one possessed of so many

natural advantages, should have sunk so low ; but the generality were amused at the scandal, thought it excellent sport, wished they had ' been there to see ' and so forth ; but, good or bad, not one paused to analyze the cause, to consider the despair that led me on, or to remember from my former habits, how little, in the possession of my reason, I was likely to commit myself in such a manner.

" Next morning, although still very weak and ill, I was sufficiently recovered to arise from my couch, and from the people of the house I learned of Sir Horace's visit, and they had picked up enough of his conversation, to know that he had departed in agitation and disgust. This roused in me a new sentiment. I was covered with shame, I was distracted that d'Estonville's father should think me worse than I really was. I felt I owed it to his memory to defend myself, to prove that though misguided, his son had not been so wholly lost, as to waste his affections upon a woman, such as I had appeared, and by this time, no doubt, had been represented to be. My sense of disgrace and mortification were so keen, that it softened my nature, and for the first time since d'Estonville's death, I wept convulsively—it was a great relief to my breaking heart.

" I now clothed myself in the deepest mourn-

ing, and though scarcely able to stand, and looking perfectly wretched from my long fast, supported by the Spanish woman, I approached Sir Horace Howard's residence. How was I received? He refused to see me; his attendants showed their ridicule and scorn openly. Can I proceed in this ignominious narrative?—Ha! my father, where was your pride in your beautiful Aigline then? Could you rest in your tomb, while the daughter of your love was so spoken of?

“ Oh, Freville Deerhurst! I have related—I have brought, I have bound myself to relate this circumstance in my life, which at the time filled me with shame and confusion; but which now I regard with loathing and horror. That I have told you this is no mark of my confidence; it is an assurance of my remorse. It is a proof of the persuasion that fills my whole soul, that guilt first conceived in folly, of itself leads, or is led by fate or necessity to the follies, which in their turn result in further and deeper guilt.

“ I tell you, Freville, there is no mercy, no charity to be found. In the troubled waters of this punished world, they could find no resting place, so they have fled to Heaven, to the Redeemer, and their space is filled with mocking, gibing demons, triumphing, rejoicing, gloating over human misery. Were it otherwise, could men so

readily build their evanescent enjoyment on the destruction of their own species? Think of the thousands, the tens of thousands, who have sent forth the loud wail of sorrow over this destructive war, think of the hearths made desolate, think of the bereaved parents, countless widows and orphans left to struggle alone on their sad pilgrimage, not a thought wasted on their woe. No, every idea is absorbed in expected conquest; the ensanguined wreath of victory is the high mark at which kings and heroes aim. With such an object in view the million may perish; enough will yet be found to grace pride's pageant; and this is a nation's glory. Oh, Heaven! why does your vengeance slumber? But I wander from my story. Freville, you condemn my vivacity, but my own afflictions have taught me to comprehend and mourn over those of others; besides during my stay in the Peninsula, there was scarcely a day that I did not witness, or hear of some fatal result of the campaign. To return to myself: no figure could convey to your mind my destitution at that period; shunned and despised, I literally stood alone in the world—not so, Sir Horace. Even amidst the public agitation—then increased by the accounts received that Soult was hastening from the South, for the purpose of forming a junction with the northern army, an intelligence so startling that Lord Wellington resolved to raise

the siege and retire to the Douro—Sir Horace was commiserated, and the officers of his son's regiment strove to show their respect for the departed by paying him every attention. Not so, to me; I had no legal claim to pity—but I linger too long over these heart-rending scenes; let me then be brief. Sir Horace with his son's remains left for England, and a few days after, in spite of the superior force which on all sides surrounded him, Lord Wellington and his army retreated from Burgos in the finest order, and proceeded towards the frontiers of Portugal. This piece of masterly generalship elicited such admiration that for a long time nothing else was spoken of; amidst such stirring events it were folly to suppose an individual could awaken interest; certainly for me there was none.

“ It might be the third day after Sir Horace's departure, that I received the following letter from one of the old officers who had accompanied him to my apartment: from its style he must have imbibed a strong prejudice against me.

“ ‘ Madam,

“ ‘ On my very esteemed friend, Sir Horace Howard quitting this for England, he requested me to acquaint you that, in compliance with an entreaty contained in a letter from his son, Captain d'Estonville Howard, of the — cavalry,

and which letter was written on the evening of the tenth of October, one thousand eight hundred and twelve, the very one previous to his gallant conduct and glorious death, which, as you, Madam, must be aware, took place at the siege of Burgos, on the eleventh of the same month—that he would make such provision as would enable you, Madam, to live in future, after a quiet respectable manner; my esteemed friend, Sir Horace, forthwith empowered me to communicate, that from henceforward he shall grant you the ample allowance of two hundred a year, to be paid quarterly at the house of Drummond and Co.; and for this, Madam, he requires no thanks, as he acts in compliance with the wishes of an only and departed child, not from any respect for, or approval of your conduct; and he expects that you will not teach him to regret his kindness by presuming to address him on the subject.

Madam, I remain,

Yours,

BENJAMIN SIMPSON OLDLEY.

Colonel of the ——'

“ ‘ P.S.—Madam, although in making the above communication to me, my esteemed friend Sir Horace Howard was too much agitated to be particular—indeed could scarcely express himself to be perfectly understood—still I opine that his grant of the two hundred a year is but an annuity; conse-

quently, Madam, in the event of your death, advise that you do not bequeath it to your family, as it might lead to litigation.'

" In a happier mood I must have smiled at the quaint, affected, business-like style of the old Colonel; but at that time I could only weep over this fresh proof of d'Estonville's love. It seemed as if even from the grave he strove to support, to shield me; also by proving that any anger he experienced from the mistaken view of my levity had passed away, it poured the first balm of consolation into my broken heart. As I again read the letter, although I knew its harshness could not have been dictated by Sir Horace, who was a perfect gentleman, still I considered how painful it must be to him to provide for the woman who had led his son into error, and who, he had reason to suppose, was utterly abandoned. Then he was reported to be avaricious, and the parting of even a small annuity out of his property might increase his uneasiness, so as a calculating spirit of self-interest certainly formed no part of my character, I hastily resolved not to accept the gift, and without further consideration sent the following answer :

" ' Sir.

" ' Yesterday evening I received your note communicating Sir Horace Howard's intention of granting me an annuity of two hundred a year.

Unfortunate as I am, I feel that any expression of thanks or gratitude on my part might be considered as an insult ; yet, Colonel Oldley, permit me through you to impress on the mind of Sir Horace, that in declining his generous offer, I am not influenced by pride or resentment, but by a consciousness that from him I deserve no kindness ; and to be compelled by love for his departed son to support a person he so utterly despised would be a trial at once cruel and unnatural, one to which, guilty as I am, I shall never subject him.

“ ‘ I have the honour to be

“ ‘ Sir,

“ ‘ Yours,

“ ‘ AIGLINE.’

“ ‘ To Colonel Simpson Oldley.’

“ I only signed my christian name, for I felt that I was hardly entitled to any other. Something like a gleam of satisfaction passed over me at having given this proof that at all events my crime did not result from cupidity. Being roused to worldly thoughts, my next act was to send back to the jeweller’s poor d’Estonville’s richest presents ; for I wished his debts to appear as small as possible to Sir Horace, and thus, as far as lay in my power, to save his memory from reproach. This required no effort, for I set no

value on the sparkling gems: with d'Estonville perished the personal vanity and ardent desire after general admiration, which had formed the basis of my errors.

“ Having so long lingered over the fatal scenes connected with Burgos, I shall relate as concisely as possible the succeeding events until I met Charles Mellish at Alicant. One circumstance, however, I must mention. Previous to quitting Burgos with the Allied Army, McDuff Gower addressed a few lines of condolence, requesting that in every extremity I would without hesitation apply to him for assistance, for that he should ever consider me in the light of a near relative. I felt much gratified at this attention, and though resolved never to trespass on his friendship, sent a grateful answer in which I explained the condition in which Sir Horace had found me; its cause and effects. This I did lest McDuff should hear the report, and regret the protection he so generously offered.

“ For some months after this, my life was a blank—I sank into a state of apathetic indifference. I quitted the handsome lodgings d'Estonville had procured, and retired to an humbler one not far from the ancient gate of Santa Maria; and although the winter had set in, the weather was so temperate that I would frequently quit the house, and wrapped in my mantilla, sit for

hours on the banks of the Arlanzon ; but the circumstances of novelty, of antiquity, of historical interest which had delighted me in Madrid no longer pleased. The gloom of my soul overshadowed the whole earth ; yet in some things I was fortunate. From my insignificance I was unmolested in Burgos, even while it was in possession of the French. Then the old Spanish woman,—a widow—with whom I resided, was friendly ; and disposed to advantage of the various articles of dress which I bartered for my maintenance. Though extremely superstitious, and like the generality of her countrywomen, making a business—a very tedious one—of her religion—I should say forms, for she had not a spiritual idea beyond them—she treated me, for a heretic, with lenity ; but fearful of being exposed to trouble, should her priests discover that she harboured one, she took great pains to initiate me into Popery, and sometimes when we were walking, nay even at our meals, or in bed, or on hearing the bell that preceded the consecrated wafer, she would make a rush, drag me to my knees, and hold me in that position till the sound died away in the distance, she mumbling prayers and crossing herself all the while.

“To this I was perfectly passive : it neither won a smile by its absurdity, nor a reproach for its inconvenience ; but, insensible as I was, I could

not visit the cathedral and other churches without a sentiment of awe, and an unqualified feeling of admiration at the treasures of paintings, statues, and royal gifts which they contained. In a happier mood, methinks of all the cities I ever witnessed, I should have preferred Burgos ; as it was, shunning the promenades and gardens frequented by the gay and happy, I spent much of my time in the chapel of the Augustines, and though its people were not my people, or its creed my creed, still I loved to hear its solemn service and the sonorous chanting of its monks. You will shake your head, Freville, when you read this, and look displeased ; but fear not. I deeply regret to say there was little devotion in my attentions ; had I been born a Catholic I should not have been the wretch I am.

I remained in Burgos till the spring of thirteen, and was there when the French entered it as their strong-hold. It is needless to say that being surrounded by the allied army, they were soon obliged to evacuate, but not until, in their discomfiture, they destroyed the works of the castle. Thus I witnessed the total destruction of the fortifications which had caused d'Estonville's death, and I experienced a savage pleasure in seeing them hurled to the earth. And now again chance threw Ellen Mulcahy in my way : her husband belonged to the British cavalry which

had stormed Burgos, and she had accompanied him throughout the campaign. Nothing could exceed her pleasure at again—as she termed it—finding me out; and as the English troops were ordered for the Ebro, she warmly entreated of me to accompany her. At first I resisted, but my Spanish hostess advised me to go, saying that the French were in such a state of irritation, they would stop at no cruelty, and as to herself, she purposed removing to Toledo. This determined me; yet I did not leave the spot where I had last seen d'Estonville without regret, unspeakable regret.

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